Aldous Huxley and Alternative Spirituality

Jake Poller



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Aldous Huxley and Alternative Spirituality

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By

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This book is printed on acid-free paper and produced in a sustainable manner.

In memory of my father,
Dr Robert Clive Poller
(1928–2010)

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Introduction

I want to start with the terminology. My first impulse was to title this book *Aldous Huxley and Mysticism*, for the subject of mysticism pervades Huxley's work, from his first collection of poetry *The Burning Wheel* (1916) to his final novel *Island* (1962). Had Huxley died in the mid-1940s, this title would have been apposite, but Huxley's spiritual interests changed over the course of his career and exceeded the parameters of mysticism. The bedrock message of *Time Must Have a Stop* (1944) and *The Perennial Philosophy* (1945),[1] the former a novel and the latter an anthology of mystical writings, was that "man's final end is unitive knowledge of the Godhead".[2] What Huxley is referring to here is what has come to be known as mystical experience, in which one's ego or self is subsumed in, or identified with, the godhead.[3] In Chapter 3, I give several examples of mystical experience and map out some of the more influential typologies of mysticism, but broadly speaking there are two types of mystical experience, which the philosopher W.T. Stace has termed introvertive and extrovertive. In the former, the mystic turns away from the phenomenal world, usually in meditation, and experiences a state of "undifferentiated unity" with the "One" or godhead; in the latter (also known as "nature mysticism" and "cosmic consciousness"), the mystic turns his or her gaze outwards but apprehends that behind the ostensible multiplicity of the phenomenal world all things are One, and the mystic is included in this unifying vision.[4] Both types of experience are accompanied by a profound sense of reality, feelings of peace or bliss, "of the holy, sacred, or divine", and are characteristically marked by "paradoxicality" and "ineffability".[5]

Jeffrey Kripal defines mysticism as "a modern comparative category that has been used in a wide variety of ways to locate, describe, and evaluate

1 There seems to be some confusion over the date of publication of this text, which is September 1945. Many scholars put it down as 1944, presumably because, for some reason, the copyright is listed as 1944 and 1945.

2 Aldous Huxley, *The Perennial Philosophy* (New York: Perennial, 2004), 154. See also the fourth tenet of Sebastian Barnack's minimum working hypothesis: "to achieve this unitive knowledge [of the Ground, Barnack's term for godhead], to realize this supreme identity, is the final end and purpose of human existence". Aldous Huxley, *Time Must Have a Stop* (London: Triad Granada, 1982), 282.

3 Huxley often used the word "godhead" in this context rather than "God" in order to avoid the anthropomorphic connotations of God as an old man with a white beard, and to suggest an impersonal cosmic deity or universal mind.

4 See W.T. Stace, *Mysticism and Philosophy* (London: Macmillan, 1961), 131–132.

5 Ibid.

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individuals' experiences of communion, union, or identity with the sacred".[6] Among the many connotations of the term, Kripal notes that mysticism may involve "nonrational, immediate, or intuitive modes of cognition".[7] In other words, there is often an alternative kind of knowing involved in mystical experience, which gives the mystic a profound insight into the nature of things, and which can result in religious beliefs, writing, sermons and so forth that are considered unorthodox. For example, Huxley was a great admirer of the medieval German mystic and theologian Meister Eckhart, and often quoted his apophthegm: "The eye with which we see God is the same as the eye with which God sees us".[8] This statement illustrates the "paradoxicality" of mystical experience observed by Stace and others: how can our human eye be the same as God's divine eye? Eckhart seems to be suggesting that God is immanent in our eye, and hence there is no distinction between our human eye and God's divine eye, or, by extension, between us and God.[9] But the Christian God is usually held to be wholly transcendent: the world is fallen, the body is profane, and thus to suggest that God's eye and our eye are one and the same is heretical; and this statement was one of several that led to Eckhart being charged with heresy. For Huxley, the teachings of Christian mystics, such as Eckhart and St John of the Cross, were more trustworthy than the dogma enshrined in Scripture, which promoted the fossilised letter rather than the living spirit of Christianity. Moreover, the fact that the mystics Huxley anthologised in *The Perennial Philosophy*, from widely different epochs and religious traditions, produced ethical and metaphysical teachings that were broadly compatible, led him to surmise that the One with whom these mystics were united or identified was the same. These mystical teachings comprise what Huxley termed the Perennial Philosophy (Huxley assumed that the term *philosophia perennis* had been coined by Gottfried Leibniz, but, as I explain in Chapter 3, it originated with the Catholic Agostino Steuco in the sixteenth century).

The precise meaning of mysticism, though, has been blurred through widespread misuse, and the term has come to cover all manner of otherworldly practices, such as spiritualism, magic and palmistry, and is often wrongly conflated with occultism (which will be defined below). This brings me to the term

6 Jeffrey J. Kripal, "Mysticism", in *Blackwell Companion to the Study of Religion*, ed. Robert A. Segal (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2006), 321.

7 Ibid.

8 See for instance Grover Smith, ed., *The Letters of Aldous Huxley* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1969), 746–747.

9 There are, of course, other interpretations of Eckhart's maxim. See for instance Bernard McGinn, *The Mystical Thought of Meister Eckhart: The Man from Whom God Hid Nothing* (New York: Crossroad Publishing, 2001), 151.

Western esotericism. According to Wouter Hanegraaff, Western esotericism can be thought of as "rejected knowledge", discountenanced both by normative religion and science.[10] The word "esoteric" was first used in the second century CE by Lucian of Samosata. It refers to things that are hidden, knowledge that is disseminated only to an initiated few, as opposed to the exoteric many. It was not until the end of the eighteenth century that the noun "esotericism" was coined in German. It seems to have appeared in English in the 1840s and is listed in Joseph E. Worcester's *A Universal and Critical Dictionary of the English Language* in 1846.[11] For Hanegraaff, the discourse of what would come to be known in the twentieth century as "Western esotericism" began to coalesce in the Renaissance when a number of Italian humanists, searching for the true sources of philosophy and religion in classical antiquity, constructed the *prisca theologia* (ancient or venerable theology) tradition that had allegedly been transmitted by Moses, Hermes Trismegistus, Zoroaster, Orpheus, Pythagoras and Plato (among others).[12] There existed a number of striking similarities between the esoteric currents associated with these figures, such as Kabbalah (Moses), Neoplatonism (Plato) and Hermetism (Hermes Trismegistus), and thus it made sense to posit that they all derived from an underlying *prisca theologia*. But it should be emphasised that both the *prisca theologia* and the category of Western esotericism under which these currents are studied are academic constructs, rather than tangible traditions with which Kabbalists, Neoplatonists and Hermetists identified in the Renaissance.[13] During the eighteenth century, Hanegraaff argues, these esoteric currents were set up as "the polemical Other of modernity" – superstitious rather than rational, magical rather than scientific, esoteric rather than empirical – and were abjected from Enlightenment discourse.[14] Occultism refers to a more recent current in Western esotericism from the mid-nineteenth century to the mid-twentieth century, and its representatives include H.P. Blavatsky, Aleister Crowley and the magicians of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn.[15]

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10 Wouter J. Hanegraaff, *Esotericism and the Academy: Rejected Knowledge in Western Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 369, 373.

11 The entry for "esotericism" cites the *Christian Observer*, an English evangelical periodical, and there is a reference to "esotericism" in vol. 42 (1843).

12 See Hanegraaff, *Esotericism and the Academy*, 5–6 and Charles B. Schmitt, "Perennial Philosophy: From Agostino Steuco to Leibniz", *Journal of the History of Ideas* 27, no.4 (1966): 508.

13 See Hanegraaff, *Esotericism and the Academy*, 368–369.

14 Ibid., 374.

15 See Marco Pasi, "Occultism", in *The Brill Dictionary of Religion*, vol. 3 (Leiden: Brill, 2006) for a more detailed definition.

Although Huxley was not a member of the Golden Dawn and showed little or no interest in, say, Christian Kabbalah, he was interested in other esoteric currents, such as spiritualism and mesmerism. In the eighteenth century, Franz Mesmer identified an invisible fluid that permeated both humans and the universe. He developed a treatment for psychosomatic maladies called "animal magnetism", in which he helped to redistribute this invisible fluid by making "passes" over the body of the patient. What is currently termed hypnosis was developed by the Marquis de Puységur, who put his subjects into trances using animal magnetism. Hypnotised subjects often exhibited paranormal powers, such as telepathy and clairvoyance. Animal magnetism was posited by many spiritualists as the mechanism that made possible the entrancement of the medium and the communication between the medium and the dead.[16] The widespread popularity of spiritualism in the nineteenth century led to the establishment of the Society for Psychical Research (SPR) in 1882, which attempted to study mediumistic phenomena in a scientific manner. In Chapter 2, I reveal that Huxley and his brother Julian were involved in investigating mediums for the SPR, which may have been the basis for his play, *The World of Light* (1931), in which he explores the phenomena of spiritualism using the terms of psychical research (telepathy, ectoplasm, etc.). Furthermore, Huxley was also an early advocate of the work of J.B. Rhine and wrote several essays on the subject of parapsychology. In the early 1950s, while Huxley was living in Hollywood, he and his wife Maria held séances and informally investigated other paranormal phenomena, and this doubtless led to Huxley joining the SPR in 1956. At around the same time, Huxley began to practise hypnotism, and used "magnetic passes" on Maria to alleviate a number of different conditions, and was friends with the psychotherapist Leslie LeCron, an authority on hypnotism. Huxley had long been an admirer of the Scottish surgeon James Esdaile, who used magnetic passes to induce anaesthesia for his patients in Calcutta in the 1840s, and his experience inspired the character of Dr Andrew in *Island*.

On the one hand, Huxley's use of psychoactive substances, such as mescaline and LSD, to facilitate spiritual insights about ultimate reality, conforms to what Hanegraaff has termed "entheogenic esotericism",[17] and his writing concerning entheogens (meaning god generated within) was a source of inspiration for later neo-shamans, such as Carlos Castaneda and Terence McKenna. On the other hand, Huxley tended to explain his psychedelic experiences in

16 See Hanegraaff, *Esotericism and the Academy*, 261 and Jeffrey J. Kripal, *Esalen: America and the Religion of No Religion* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 139.

17 Wouter J. Hanegraaff, "Entheogenic Esotericism", in *Contemporary Esotericism*, ed. Egil Asprem and Kennet Granholm (Abingdon: Routledge, 2014), 392.

terms of mysticism; they bear a marked resemblance to what Stace calls extrovertive experience; and in *Island* the *moksha*-medicine (psilocybin mushrooms) produces the "full-blown mystical experience" of "One in all and All in one".[18] If, then, calling this book *Aldous Huxley and Mysticism* would seem to exclude the full range of Huxley's spiritual interests, to title it *Aldous Huxley and Western Esotericism* would downplay the very considerable influence of mysticism on his work. Which brings me to the title I've chosen, *Aldous Huxley and Alternative Spirituality*. While the term "alternative spirituality" is of relatively recent vintage (according to Google Books Ngram Viewer, it was first used in 1959), what it represents was crystallising out of the cultic milieu of the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and includes spiritualism, Theosophy, the Arcane School of Alice Bailey, psychical research, astrology, Eastern religions and philosophy, the new physics, G.I. Gurdjieff, P.D. Ouspensky, Jiddu Krishnamurti and so on.[19] Admittedly, Huxley did not use this term himself as it only gained currency with the New Age culture that emerged in the 1970s, but it is one that usefully encompasses both the several varieties of mysticism (neo-Vedanta,[20] Tantra, Taoism, Zen Buddhism etc.) that interested Huxley as well as spiritualism, parapsychology and his eclectic attitude to spirituality that would become the hallmark of the New Age.

As I demonstrate in Chapter 6, Huxley was a key influence in the formation of the New Age movement. He was an early practitioner of yoga, meditation and the Alexander technique, all of which would later be identified with the alternative spirituality of the New Age. He also adopted alternative therapies, such as the magnetic passes mentioned above, as well as the Bates method to improve his eyesight, dianetics and the E-Therapy pioneered by A.L. Kitselman. In the last decade of his life, Huxley moved away from the life-denying asceticism of the 1940s, in which the ultimate goal was mystical identity with the godhead, and began to advocate this-worldly forms of mysticism that celebrated the body and the world as manifestations of the godhead. Huxley's new attitude to spirituality is exemplified in *Island*, in which the inhabitants of Pala pick and choose their beliefs and practices from different religious traditions, such as Tantra, Zen and Mahayana Buddhism, rather than being indoctrinated by one. Indeed, they are taught to mistrust dogma and institutional religion,

18 Aldous Huxley, *Island* (London: Vintage, 2005), 138.

19 The "cultic milieu" was a term advanced by the sociologist Colin Campbell in 1972, and refers to a subculture of individualistic spiritual seekers who rejected institutionalised religion and positivistic science, and embraced the abjected, heterodox knowledge of esotericism, the paranormal and so on. See Colin Campbell, "The Cult, the Cultic Milieu and Secularization", *A Sociological Yearbook of Religion in Britain* 5 (1972): 119–136.

20 For a definition of neo-Vedanta and neo-Advaita, see Chapter 3.

and to form their own subjective experiential spirituality through the sacramental use of psilocybin mushrooms. This attitude clearly anticipates (in the sense of being a precursor rather than predicting) the New Age selection of doctrines from the "supermarket of spiritual choices", such as karma, reincarnation and the *cakras*.[21] The "alternative" spirituality championed by New Age spiritual seekers was an alternative to normative organised religions, with their dogmas, churches and sacred texts. If, as Boas Huss has noted, the adjective "spiritual" began as an antonym to the secular, from the 1970s onwards it began to be used in opposition to institutional religion and culminated in the new category of "spiritual but not religious".[22] Despite the rampant commodification of New Age culture, the "alternative" in alternative spirituality also signifies an opposition to mainstream culture.[23] One of the utopian elements of Pala is its isolation from global capitalism: rather than exploiting the island's natural resources, the Palanese live in harmony with nature and take from it only what they need. With the help of the *moksha*-medicine, they are able to apprehend the immanent godhead in the world around them, which inspires in them a reverent attitude to nature. This spiritual approach to ecology was again something that would be eagerly embraced by both the New Age and Deep Ecology movements, as I reveal in Chapter 6.

A few last words on my terminology. Where previous generations of Huxley scholars have spoken of Huxley's "mystical conversion", I have elected to use the phrase "mystical turn", since it is common parlance in academia to speak of the "empirical turn" in Western esotericism, or the "material turn" in the humanities, and I have always felt that the word "conversion" implies a road-to-Damascus moment, whereas the reality was a more gradual process, as I demonstrate in Chapters 1 and 4. I have chosen to capitalise Huxley's Perennial Philosophy in order to differentiate it from other forms of perennialism, such as Traditionalism, Theosophy and the *philosophia perennis* of Agostino Steuco (for which see Chapter 3). Finally, while it has become customary in the field of Western esotericism to use the word "entheogen", I have elected to use Humphry Osmond's word "psychedelic" instead, since it was one that Huxley used and liked (even if, at first, he tended to misspell it). "Entheogen" was coined by a committee of scholars in 1979, including Carl Ruck, R.G. Wasson and Jonathan Ott, who felt that the term "psychedelic" had become besmirched

21 See Christopher Partridge, *The Re-Enchantment of the West: Alternative Spiritualities, Sacralization, Popular Culture and Occulture*, 2 vols (London: T&T Clark, 2004–2005), 1: 117.

22 See Boas Huss, "Spirituality: The Emergence of a New Cultural Category and its Challenge to the Religious and the Secular", *Journal of Contemporary Religion* 29, no. 1 (2014): 50.

23 See Steven Sutcliffe and Marion Bowman, introduction to *Beyond New Age: Exploring Alternative Spirituality* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000), 11.

by its association with unwashed, long-haired spiritual seekers, and wanted a more scientific-sounding term to describe psychoactive substances associated with religious rituals.[24] But, as Christopher Partridge points out, by the end of the 1990s the word "entheogen" had been appropriated by the "psychedelic occulture", and the undesirable associations of "psychedelic" became attached to "entheogen", which promptly lost its scientific pretensions.[25] The term "psychedelic", then, seems the more appropriate term in the context of Huxley's work.

One of the most cogent justifications for a study of the place of alternative spirituality in Huxley's work is that there has been no full-length monograph on the subject for almost four decades. It is customary to point out the shortcomings of previous studies, and I now turn to this invidious task. In 1962, Sisirkumar Ghose published *Aldous Huxley: A Cynical Salvationist*, which seems to be based on a PhD thesis he submitted in April 1945, though Ghose insists, perhaps through an excess of modesty, that his study "is neither a scholarly work nor one of literary analysis".[26] Ghose cheerfully admits that before completing his thesis he had not been able to obtain copies of either *Time Must Have a Stop* or *The Perennial Philosophy*, which are of obvious importance in any consideration of Huxley's work, and in particular one that attempts to analyse the impact of Huxley's interest in Hinduism and Buddhism. In order to rectify this, Ghose writes that he has "added a few references to both [texts] and an appendix on *Heaven and Hell*".[27] Nonetheless, Ghose omits several key texts such as *The Doors of Perception* (1954) and *Island* (1962), and does not differentiate between the different mystical philosophies Huxley championed, so for instance there's no mention of Tantra or Taoism.

The thesis of *Aldous Huxley: A Study of His Novels* (1974) by K. Bhaskara Ramamurty is that Huxley's novels constitute a "pilgrim's progress", in which can be discerned Huxley's "analysis of the ape and essence in man, and his recipe to help the ape realize its essence to achieve transcendence".[28] There's an uncritical conflation of Huxley and his characters: according to Ramamurty,

24 See R. Gordon Wasson *et al.*, *Persephone's Quest: Entheogens and the Origins of Religion* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), 30 and Christopher Partridge, *High Culture: Drugs, Mysticism, and the Pursuit of Transcendence in the Modern World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 4.

25 Partridge, *High Culture*, 6.

26 Sisirkumar Ghose, *Aldous Huxley: A Cynical Salvationist* (London: Asia Publishing House, 1962), viii.

27 Ghose, *Aldous Huxley*, ix.

28 K. Bhaskara Ramamurty, *Aldous Huxley: A Study of His Novels* (New York: Asia Publishing House, 1974), v.

Denis Stone in *Crome Yellow* (1921) = Huxley, since both Denis and Huxley are published poets; Gumbril Junior in *Antic Hay* (1923) = Huxley, since both Gumbril and Huxley were school masters, and so on. And since Denis, Gumbril, Calamy, Quarles, Beavis and Rivers are all essentially Huxley, they represent for Ramamurty the same pilgrim who progresses through Huxley's *oeuvre*.[29] I'm not contesting the fact that Huxley was an autobiographical author, and certainly there are many parallels between himself and his characters, but Ramamurty's naively biographical readings strike the contemporary scholar as reductive. Moreover, since Ramamurty sticks so closely to Huxley's novels and essays, his study lacks context. So while there's a whole chapter on Lawrence's influence on Huxley, primarily because Lawrence was the inspiration for several of Huxley's characters, there are only two references to Gerald Heard, and none to Jiddu Krishnamurti, who were both significant spiritual influences, as I demonstrate in Chapter 4.

In contrast, *Aldous Huxley and Eastern Wisdom* (1981) by B.L. Chakoo is more sophisticated. However, there is no attempt on Chakoo's part to situate Huxley's Perennial Philosophy among the sundry varieties of perennialism that obtained in the twentieth century, such as Theosophy and Traditionalism. This is perhaps no surprise since the study of Western esotericism still occupied a marginal place in academia in 1981, and Chakoo did not have access to many of the sources I drew upon in my analysis of perennialism in Chapter 3. On the other hand, Chakoo's study would have benefited from an examination of the influential typologies of mysticism offered by William James, Rudolf Otto and William Stace, as well as some discussion of Steven Katz's famous critique of perennialism in the essay "Language, Epistemology, and Mysticism" (1978).[30] Chakoo also takes a highly judgemental, Brahminical stance on psychedelic drugs, and claims that mescaline "experiences bring about a wilful damaging of brain-functions", though he does not cite any supporting evidence, notwithstanding a Professor Esser, who affirms that mescaline users usually suffer "a hangover followed by vomiting", which is not something that I've read in the literature on the subject.[31] Chakoo also categorically states that mystical experience "must be earned through mortification or by Grace" and that to "get it by mescalin and LSD would be to get it only momentarily (if at all one gets [*sic*]) and that too by trickery".[32] But Huxley argued that just as mescaline caused

29 See ibid., 16–17.

30 Chakoo was obviously aware of Stace's seminal text *Mysticism and Philosophy* (1960), since he quotes it in a footnote. See B.L. Chakoo, *Aldous Huxley and Eastern Wisdom* (Delhi: Atma Ram, 1981), 5n2.

31 Ibid., 254.

32 Ibid., 254n1.

bio-chemical changes that led to a greater portion of what he termed Mind at Large (a cosmic mind or godhead) being admitted to consciousness, so too did traditional spiritual exercises and mortifications (Huxley's use of psychedelic drugs will be discussed in detail in Chapters 5 and 6).[33] Furthermore, Chakoo quotes Huxley from *The Doors of Perception* as affirming that mescaline can only catalyse visionary experience,[34] but, as I note in Chapter 5, Huxley later had what he asserted were full-blown mystical experiences on mescaline and LSD.

Dana Sawyer's 2002 biography of Huxley should also be mentioned. As a professor of philosophy and religion, Sawyer has a superior grasp of mysticism to Huxley's previous biographers, Sybille Bedford, David King Dunaway and Nicholas Murray, who were, to put it diplomatically, a little sketchy on the details. I would argue, though, that Sawyer over-emphasises the influence of "Vedanta" on Huxley's work. For instance, in the concluding chapter of his biography, Sawyer writes: "The Hindu doctrine of Advaita Vedanta comes closest to Huxley's viewpoint, and it's significant that Aldous kept a connection with the Vedanta Society all his life".[35] But, as I point out in Chapters 5 and 6, Huxley moved away from what he regarded as the life-denying asceticism of neo-Advaita and embraced the life-affirming philosophies of Taoism and Tantra instead, and it is telling that Sawyer does not mention these traditions in his biography. It is impossible to deny the influence of Tantra on *Island*, but Sawyer omits any mention of the Tantric practice of *maithuna* in his brief discussion of the book. Moreover, Huxley's disenchantment with neo-Advaita can be seen in his decision to stop lecturing at the Vedanta Society of Southern California. In a letter from October 1956, he declines an invitation to speak at the Society and affirms: "I am not a religious person – in the sense that I am not a believer in metaphysical propositions, not a worshipper or a performer of rituals, and not a joiner of churches – and therefore I do not feel qualified or inclined to tell people in general what to think or do".[36] This illustrates Huxley's mistrust of organised religion and in particular the devotional approach (or *bhakti marga*) of the Vedanta Society of Southern California, with its shrine containing relics of Ramakrishna and the ritual worship practiced by initiates (see Chapter 4 for details).

These studies, then, which were mostly published in the 1970s and 80s, are out of date and do not benefit from the wealth of new scholarly apparatus that has been published in the interim, largely as result of the tireless efforts

33 See Aldous Huxley, "Drugs That Shape Men's Minds", in *Aldous Huxley Complete Essays*, ed. James Sexton and Robert S. Baker, 6 vols (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2000–2002), 6: 301. Hereafter *CE*.

34 See Chakoo, *Aldous Huxley*, 258.

35 Dana Sawyer, *Aldous Huxley: A Biography* (New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 2002), 188.

36 Smith, *Letters*, 811.

of James Sexton. First and foremost, there was the six-volume *Aldous Huxley Complete Essays*, edited by Sexton and Robert S. Baker, published by Ivan R. Dee in 2000–2002. Then there was a long-overdue second collection of Huxley's letters, again edited by Sexton, published in 2007. In 2010, Sexton edited a collection of Huxley's unpublished short stories, *Consider the Lilies*; most recently, he co-edited the collection *Psychedelic Prophets: The Letters of Aldous Huxley and Humphry Osmond* (2018). Sexton has also been industrious in finding obscure essays and letters by Huxley that did not make it into his *Complete Essays* and *Selected Letters* and publishing them in the *Aldous Huxley Annual*, which since its inception in 2001 has provided a stimulating forum for Huxley scholarship. The Aldous Huxley Society was founded in 1998, and in addition to publishing the *Aldous Huxley Annual,* they organise the four-yearly International Aldous Huxley Symposium, which was most recently hosted at the University of Almeria in Spain (2017).

Turning now to the content of my book. In Chapter 1, I give a general account of Huxley's life, which highlights his spiritual influences, such as D.H. Lawrence, Gerald Heard and Jiddu Krishnamurti.[37] I also pay close attention to Huxley's connection with figures from Western esotericism, such as P.D. Ouspensky, Philip Heseltine (a.k.a. Peter Warlock) and Aleister Crowley. In Chapter 2, I examine the role of science in Huxley's work, and the tension that existed between the scientific materialism he inherited from his grandfather T.H. Huxley and the more spiritual worldview propounded by his granduncle Matthew Arnold. Huxley attempted to find a synthesis between science and alternative spirituality, and was an early adopter of the idea that the "new physics" of relativity theory and quantum mechanics supported an idealist worldview. His mature position was that we must make the "best of both worlds", the "world of science and the world of religion and metaphysics", and this can be seen in his final novel *Island*.[38] I also discuss Huxley's interest in the paranormal, and his close association with the SPR and J.B. Rhine, and argue that Huxley hoped that parapsychology would build a bridge between conventional science on the one hand and mystical experience on the other.

In Chapter 3, I contextualise Huxley's notion of the Perennial Philosophy, differentiating it from similar traditions and terms that relate to an ancient wisdom religion, such as the *prisca theologica*, the *philosophia perennis*, Theosophy, Traditionalism and perennialism. I briefly explore the evolution of neo-Vedanta, and its cross-pollination with Western traditions such as Unitarianism and American Transcendentalism, and the way in which Vivekananda and his

37 I'm aware that strictly speaking it should be Krishnamurti Jiddu, since Jiddu is his surname, but I shall follow the scholarly convention of referring to him as Jiddu Krishnamurti.

38 Aldous Huxley, "Mother", in *CE* 5: 345.

followers sought to press Ramakrishna's Tantrism into the procrustean bed of Advaita Vedanta. Since the Perennial Philosophy is often mistakenly inferred as universalist, I also discuss the universalist claims of neo-Vedanta. Finally, I situate Huxley's perennialism in the context of the study of mysticism in the twentieth century and interrogate the influential theories and typologies advanced by William James, Rudolf Otto, William Stace and Steven Katz.

In Chapter 4, I analyse Huxley's relationship with Gerald Heard and Jiddu Krishnamurti. In particular, I take a close look at the mystical turn in Huxley's work in the context of his friendship with Heard, his propaganda work for the Peace Pledge Union (PPU), and his adoption of meditation and *prāṇāyāma* in order to combat his insomnia. I examine Heard's conception of yoga at this time, and his attempts to achieve "superconsciousness" through meditation groups, first at Dartington Hall School, where he was a part-time lecturer, and subsequently with the PPU. I also analyse the involvement of Huxley and Heard with Swami Prabhavananda and the Vedanta Society of Southern California, as well as the short-lived rift between Huxley and Heard and the establishment of Trabuco College (a spiritual community based in a monastery sixty miles outside Los Angeles). Shortly after moving to America, Huxley sought out Krishnamurti, and this resulted in a lasting friendship. I examine the intriguing parallels between their thinking and situate Krishnamurti's later philosophy against the background of the Theosophical Society, who had cherished him as their World Teacher until he renounced this role in 1929.

In Chapter 5, I analyse Huxley's representation of sex and the body in relation to his changing spiritual convictions. I divide his work into three periods: the romantic phase, from the start of his career up to 1935, in which Huxley's heroes attempt to worship women in the romantic manner and spiritualise sex, and are disillusioned with the reality; the ascetic phase, which begins with *Eyeless in Gaza* (1936) and runs to the early 1950s, in which sex is portrayed as an impediment on the spiritual path, and in which Huxley's protagonists are typically libertines who embrace celibacy, mysticism and meditation after a deus ex machina (most famously, the falling dog for Anthony Beavis); and lastly the Tantric phase, which runs from Huxley's first mescaline experience in 1953 to the end of his life a decade later, in which Huxley embraced the life-affirming philosophies of Tantra, Taoism, Zen and Mahayana Buddhism, which resulted in sex being positively portrayed for the first time in his fiction. I problematise Nicholas Murray's portrait of Huxley as a Lothario figure, and examine Huxley's notion of Tantra and *maithuna* against what current and previous generations of scholars have written about it, including Heinrich Zimmer, John Woodroffe, Hugh Urban and David Gordon White.

In the final chapter, I examine Huxley's legacy with respect to alternative spirituality, which I divide into three sections. In the first section, I explore

Huxley's notion of "human potentialities", which influenced the founders of the Esalen Institute in Big Sur, California, as well as the Human Potential movement that was associated with it. Esalen was one of the key centres for the alternative spirituality that emerged from the counterculture. In the second section, I analyse Huxley's influential mystical reading of the psychedelic experience, which led the psychiatrist Humphry Osmond to abandon the received idea that mescaline was a mimicker of psychosis or "psychotomimetic" and to coin another term "psychedelic", meaning mind manifesting, and denoting Huxley's Mind at Large, which better represented the spiritual potential of the drug. I also examine Huxley's influence on psychedelic seekers such as Timothy Leary and Terence McKenna. And, in the final section, I investigate Huxley's influence on the New Age and Deep Ecology movements.

The overall purpose of the book, then, is to demonstrate the centrality of alternative spirituality in the work of Aldous Huxley. Or rather, to generate new insights into his work by analysing the different varieties of spirituality that appealed to Huxley over the course of his long career, for there is a tendency among Huxley scholars to treat the subject of mysticism monolithically, as if it were all much of a muchness. This methodology is necessary as earlier scholars, such as Jerome Meckier and Peter Firchow, emphasised the satirical dimension of Huxley's work, and thus did not give Huxley's spiritual concerns sufficient attention.[39] Much the same can be said of the latest monographs on Huxley, which focus on more niche concerns, such as politics and education.[40] It is a pity that one of the most astute Huxley scholars, the late David Bradshaw, did not engage with Huxley's spiritual interests and did not live to complete the biography of Huxley he had planned. Finally, as noted above, the existing monographs on the subject of mysticism in Huxley's work are out of date and do not benefit from recent (or at any rate twenty-first century) critical apparatus as well as the important scholarly articles that have appeared in the *Aldous Huxley Annual*. Perhaps the most insightful scholar who has written about Huxley's spiritual interests is Jeffrey J. Kripal, the historian of religion, whose work I have relied on throughout this monograph, and who deserves much wider recognition among Huxley scholars.

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39 See for instance Jerome Meckier, *Aldous Huxley: Satire and Structure* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1969); idem, *Aldous Huxley: Modern Satirical Novelist of Ideas*, ed. Peter Edgerly Firchow and Bernfried Nugel (Berlin: LIT Verlag, 2006); and Peter Firchow, *Aldous Huxley: Satirist and Novelist* (Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 1972).

40 See Alessandro Maurini, *Aldous Huxley: The Political Thought of a Man of Letters* (London: Lexington Books, 2017) and Ronald Lee Zigler, *The Educational Prophecies of Aldous Huxley: The Visionary Legacy of "Brave New World", "Ape and Essence", and "Island"* (New York: Routledge, 2015).

CHAPTER 1

Aldous Huxley (1894–1963)

Aldous Leonard Huxley was born on July 26, 1894, in Godalming, Surrey. He came from a distinguished intellectual lineage: his grandfather was T.H. Huxley, who was nicknamed "Darwin's bulldog" for his advocacy of evolutionary theory; and his great-uncle was the poet and critic Matthew Arnold. His childhood was marked by three traumatic episodes: in 1908, his mother Julia died of cancer; three years later, at the age of sixteen, he contracted an eye infection (*keratitis punctata*) that permanently impaired his eyesight; and in 1914, his brother Trevenen committed suicide.[1] The unforgiving satire and cynical assessments of human nature that mark Huxley's early work can be interpreted as a response to these tragedies.[2]

After attending Eton, Huxley read English at Balliol College, Oxford (1913–1916). He had originally intended to study biology like his brother Julian (1887–1975), but his damaged eyesight rendered lab work impossible.[3] At the outbreak of World War I, he initially shared the patriotic enthusiasm of his peers, but by March 1916 he was expressing his disgust with the war in a letter to Julian, and maintaining that in retrospect he'd have been a "conscientious objector, or nearly so".[4] But he never had to take this stance officially as he was rejected for military service as a result of his poor eyesight.[5] His sympathy for conscientious objectors may have been encouraged by his friendship with Lady Ottoline Morrell, who invited Huxley to her home, Garsington Manor, on November 28, 1915,[6] and thereafter he became a frequent guest, and socialised

1 See Nicholas Murray, *Aldous Huxley: An English Intellectual* (London: Abacus, 2003), 20, 29–30, 37–38.

2 See David Bradshaw, "Aldous Huxley (1894–1963)", in *Brave New World* (London: Vintage, 2004), xvii–xviii and Julian Huxley, *Memories*, 2 vols. (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972–73), 1: 65.

3 David Bradshaw, "'A Blind Stay-at-Home Mole': Huxley at Oxford, 1913–1916", *Aldous Huxley Annual* 12/13 (2012–13): 196.

4 Smith, *Letters*, 97.

5 See Murray, *Aldous Huxley*, 60, 100.

6 Much to my chagrin, I have twice previously given this date in articles as November 29, 1915. I was led astray by the fact that Huxley's name appears in the Garsington visitor's book under this date (see George J. Zytaruk and James T. Boulton, eds., *The Letters of D.H. Lawrence*, vol. 2 [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981], 452). However, in Smith, *Letters*, 86, Huxley writes to his father on December 8, 1915, that he visited Garsington "on Sunday", i.e. the twenty-eighth, rather than Monday November 29. This also makes sense of the fact that

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with notable pacifists such as Bertrand Russell, Clive Bell and Lytton Strachey. It was through the agency of Morrell that in December 1915 Huxley met D.H. Lawrence, who became a great friend and mentor to Huxley a decade later.[7] At Garsington, Huxley first encountered many eminent artists and intellectuals, including T.S. Eliot, Virginia Woolf, Katherine Mansfield, Dorothy Brett and Dora Carrington, as well as the Belgian refugee Maria Nys (1898–1955), whom he married in 1919. While W.B. Yeats also became a Garsington regular, his first visit was in December 1919,[8] after Huxley's visits had all but petered out (Huxley spent a week at Garsington at the end of July 1920 and did not visit again before quarrelling with Morrell over *Crome Yellow* in December 1921), and there is no evidence that they met.[9]

It was as an undergraduate at Oxford that Huxley became interested in mysticism. In a letter to Julian in December 1915, he affirms: "One cannot escape mysticism; it positively thrusts itself, the only possibility, upon one".[10] There's a jaunty pageantry in Huxley's early letters and I've no doubt that Huxley is being hyperbolical here. One might expect Julian Huxley, as a scientist, to be sceptical about mysticism, but as a boy at Eton he reports a few episodes of extrovertive experience.[11] In an interview in 1961, Huxley recalled reading Jacob Boehme at Oxford and "having various Catholic friends who knew a certain amount about the mystical tradition in Catholicism"; he read mystical texts during this period "with a mixture of admiration and hostility".[12] In a letter to the critic Chad Walsh, Huxley reports that he derived the title of his first volume of poetry, *The Burning Wheel* (1916), from Boehme.[13] Huxley may well have read Boehme as a result of references to him in Blake, whose work he

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D.H. Lawrence's name appears under the November 29 entry, but Morrell notes that when Huxley visited, she and her husband were alone.

7 See James Sexton, ed., *Selected Letters of Aldous Huxley* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2007), 20. For more on the influence of Lawrence, see Chapter 2 and Jake Poller, "The Philosophy of Life-Worship: D.H. Lawrence and Aldous Huxley", *D.H. Lawrence Review* 34–35 (2010): 75–91.

8 See R.F. Foster, *W.B. Yeats: A Life*, vol. 2., *1915–1939* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 158.

9 See Smith, *Letters*, 188–189, for his letters from Garsington in July 1920, in which he mentions the presence of Eliot at a party on August 1 but not Yeats.

10 Smith, *Letters*, 88.

11 See Julian Huxley, *Memories*, 1: 50.

12 From Sybille Bedford's transcript of the BBC John Chandos interview with Aldous Huxley recorded on July 7 and 11, 1961, in the Huxley archive of the Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center, University of Texas, Austin.

13 Chad Walsh, "Pilgrimage to the Perennial Philosophy: The Case of Aldous Huxley", *Journal of Bible and Religion* 16, no. 1 (January 1948): 7.

was recommending at this time.[14] In *Eyeless in Gaza* (1936), Anthony Beavis, his semi-autobiographical protagonist, provides a list of the books he is reading as an undergraduate at Oxford: the seventeenth-century Christian scholar Pierre Bayle; Thomas Aquinas' *Summa contra Gentiles*; *The Way of Perfection* by St Teresa of Avila; St John of the Cross; and *History of Sacerdotal Celibacy* by Henry C. Lea.[15] If the above is at all representative of what Huxley was reading as an undergraduate at Balliol, it seems safe to assume that his knowledge of mysticism was far more extensive than the work of Jacob Boehme. Huxley's attitude to mysticism at this time may perhaps be inferred from Beavis, whose best friend Brian Foxe accuses him of using scepticism to attack religion, and using mysticism against science when it suits his purposes.[16]

In his early poems, Huxley occasionally expresses a kind of mystical frustration that doubtless derives from reading Boehme *et al.* A good example is "Darkness" from *The Burning Wheel*, in which the speaker laments that the darkness of "the crippled body and the crooked heart" prevents him from experiencing the "mystic darkness that laps God's throne".[17] Moreover, in his letters he sometimes expresses a feeling of mystical oneness with nature, but these are intimations rather than episodes of nature mysticism. For instance, he writes in June 1915: "One does feel tremendously, when one is in this beautiful country [Scotland], that one is part of a larger soul, which embraces everything".[18] But Huxley's fledgling interest in mysticism had to contend with his countervailing impulse to rationalise or psychologise religion. For instance, in "The Birth of God", collected in *Leda* (1920), Huxley's speaker envisages a primordial man, isolated from "the wolfish pack" on a frigid night and feeling terrified,

> When through his bleared and suffering mind
> A sudden tremor of comfort ran,
> And the void was filled by a rushing wind,
> And he breathed a sense of something friendly and near,
> And in privation the life of God began.[19]

14 See for instance Smith, *Letters*, 96, in which he urges Julian to read both Blake and Boehme.

15 Aldous Huxley, *Eyeless in Gaza* (London: Grafton, 1977), 80.

16 See ibid., 83.

17 Aldous Huxley, "Darkness", in *The Collected Poetry of Aldous Huxley*, ed. Donald Watt (London: Chatto & Windus, 1971), 17.

18 Smith, *Letters*, 73.

19 Watt, *Collected Poetry*, 99.

Similarly, in the story "Nuns at Luncheon", the seventeen-year-old Melpomene, after being molested by her Latin master, channels her libido into religious devotion; the German doctor, who has been relating her background to Miss Penny, notes that among his patients mysticism "was very often mixed up with *Geschlechtsleben*" (sex life).[20] In "The Ninth Philosopher's Song" (also collected in *Leda*), religion is portrayed as a form of escapism, but the speaker cannot benefit from it, being "too rational by half", and must confront his grief without religious consolation.[21]

After obtaining a First in English Language and Literature in 1916, Huxley worked on the farm at Garsington for several months alongside conscientious objectors. Huxley used Garsington as the setting for the novella "Farcical History of Richard Greenow" (1920) and his first novel *Crome Yellow* (1921). The former may have been inspired by the life of William Sharp (1855–1905), a Scottish writer and art critic who, frustrated by gender polarity, cultivated a female persona, Fiona Macleod, under whose name he produced novels and poems in the manner of the Celtic Twilight; he also became a member of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn during this period.[22] In "Richard Greenow", the protagonist is afflicted with a form of mental hermaphroditism, in which by day he is a high-minded philosopher and communist activist, and by night a prolific novelist of romantic fiction whose nom de plume is Pearl Bellairs. The narrator characterises Dick as: "Two persons in one, male and female [...] a new William Sharp and Fiona MacLeod [*sic*] – a more intelligent William, a vulgarer Fiona".[23] Pearl's novels are produced via a kind of automatic writing, in that Dick goes bed and wakes up to discover a new instalment of *Heartsease Fitzroy* on his desk. "It was as though some goblin, some Lob-lie-by-the-fire, came each night to perform the appointed task, vanishing before the morning".[24] It is not that Huxley is suggesting that the cloying claptrap of *Heartsease Fitzroy* is dictated by a spirit, it is more likely that he is mocking the automatic writing of famous mediums, such as Leonora Piper, or perhaps he is implying that the fey

20 Aldous Huxley, *Mortal Coils: Five Stories* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1958), 214.

21 Watt, *Collected Poetry*, 107.

22 See Murray G.H. Pittock, "Sharp, William [Fiona MacLeod] (1855–1905)", *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, online ed., ed. David Cannadine, Oxford: OUP, 2004, http://o-www.oxforddnb.com.catalogue.libraries.london.ac.uk/view/article/36041 (accessed September 22, 2017) and Steve Blamires, *The Little Book of the Great Enchantment* (Cheltenham: Skylight Press, 2008), 98.

23 Aldous Huxley, "Farcical History of Richard Greenow", in *Limbo: Six Stories and a Play* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1920), 37.

24 Ibid., 35.

Celtic visions of Fiona Macleod were produced by automatic writing.[25] The personality split between Dick and Pearl is a metaphor for mind-body dualism, with the rational intellectual Dick waging a war against the sentimentality and religiosity of Pearl. Walsh notes that Huxley's early work often features such split personalities and attributes this to Huxley's own struggle to reconcile the mind-body dichotomy: with his rational mind he "believed that life and the universe were completely devoid of meaning", while "his intuition rebelled against the emptiness of such an outlook".[26] At the outbreak of World War I, Pearl takes to writing jingoistic newspaper articles while Richard becomes a conscientious objector and is sent to work on the land at Crome, Huxley's fictional version of Garsington.

Some critics allege that *Crome Yellow* is a satirical attack on Garsington and Ottoline Morrell's pacifist coterie, and conflate Priscilla Wimbush, the chatelaine of Crome, with Morrell.[27] But, as I have argued elsewhere, while the similarities between the two, such as their eccentric taste in clothes and interior décor, are superficial, the differences are profound: for example, where Priscilla is a compulsive gambler who spends her time drawing up horoscopes for horses, and who is taken in by the spiritual charlatan Mr Barbecue-Smith, Morrell was a shrewd judge of literature, whose guests included some of the finest writers of the post-war period and who, in addition to sheltering conscientious objectors during the war, hosted meetings of the Union of Democratic Control in her London house, worked for the Friends of Foreigners Organisation (who helped the families of interned German husbands and fathers) and took in Belgium refugees (such as Maria Nys, Huxley's first wife).[28] Moreover, in *Crome Yellow*, Huxley's satire is indiscriminate, and he is just as ruthless in lampooning the young poet Denis Stone (whom Huxley described to Morrell as "a caricature of myself in extreme youth"[29]) as he is in exposing the absurdities of Priscilla's character. Where Morrell was interested in mysticism and

25 Huxley's contempt for Macleod can be gauged from his review of *The Immortal Hour* in "New Friends and Old", in *CE* 1: 292–293.

26 Walsh, "Pilgrimage to the Perennial Philosophy", 6.

27 See for instance Jerome Meckier, "Aldous Huxley, Satiric Sonneteer: 'The Defeat of Youth'", *Contemporary Literature* 29, no. 4 (1988): 582–584 and Peter E. Firchow, "Nancy (Myra, Lucy); Carrington (Mary, Anne); and Aldous (Theodore, Walter): Fact and Fiction", *Aldous Huxley Annual*, 5 (2005): 106.

28 For Morrell's pacifist work, see Jonathan Atkin, *A War of Individuals: Bloomsbury Attitudes to the Great War* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002), 42–43. For a more detailed analysis of Huxley's pacifist sympathies and his relationship with Morrell, see Jake Poller, "'These Maximal Horrors of War': Aldous Huxley, Garsington and the Great War", *Aldous Huxley Annual* 6 (2006): 63–76.

29 Sexton, *Selected Letters*, 107.

was obsessed with *The Imitation of Christ* by Thomas à Kempis,[30] Priscilla is a devotee of New Thought, the Christian Science of Mary Baker Eddy and the Theosophy of Annie Besant.[31] Huxley was familiar with Besant's work; in a letter to his father he reports that he has been discussing Theosophy with his pupils at Eton (where Huxley taught from September 1917 to April 1919), pointing out "Mrs Besant's errors in science and history".[32] He judges Theosophy to be "a good enough religion", but dismisses the supernatural "bunkum about astral bodies, spiritual hierarchies, reincarnation and so forth".[33] One of Priscilla's guests, Ivor Lombard, is a telepathist and medium, and produces drawings of spirits and "astral beings".[34] Another guest, Barbecue-Smith, practises automatic writing, and produces books of a vaguely spiritual character, such as *Pipelines to the Infinite* and *Humble Heroisms*. William Tindall argues that the former is reminiscent of "one of the juicier tracts of D.H. Lawrence",[35] but its thesis that there's a connection between the "subconscious" and the "Infinite" ironically anticipates Huxley's model of the psyche in *The Devils of Loudun* (1952) and *The Doors of Perception* (1954), which will be discussed in the next chapter. Huxley also lampoons palm-reading in *Crome Yellow*: at the annual fair, Scogan dresses up as a witch called "Sesostris, the Sorceress of Ecbatana", and terrifies the villagers with dire prophecies, as well as using his fake chiromancy to set up a tryst with a comely village girl.[36]

While Huxley's modernist peers experimented with form and sought exciting new ways of representing consciousness, both Huxley's poetry and fiction were fairly conventional. Most of the poems in *The Burning Wheel* are sonnets and *Crome Yellow* drew comparisons with the work of the nineteenth-century writer Thomas Love Peacock, whose Menippean satires were set in country houses and burlesqued "[p]edants, bigots, cranks, parvenus, virtuosi,

30 Miranda Seymour, *Ottoline Morrell: Life on a Grand Scale* (Sevenoaks: Hodder & Stoughton, 1992), 25. Seymour maintains that Morrell is the inspiration for the spiritual Mrs Bidlake in *Point Counter Point*.

31 See Aldous Huxley, *Crome Yellow* (London: Vintage, 2004), 7.

32 Smith, *Letters*, 136.

33 Ibid., 136–137.

34 Huxley, *Crome Yellow*, 92.

35 W.Y. Tindall, "The Trouble with Aldous Huxley", *American Scholar* 11 (Autumn 1942): 452–453.

36 See Huxley, *Crome Yellow*, 147–149. Huxley later said that this scene was inspired by Rochester's dressing up as a fortune-teller in *Jane Eyre* (see Smith, *Letters*, 640). T.S. Eliot, when asked whether his Madam Sosostris was named after Huxley's sorceress Sesostris, affirmed that he had read *Crome Yellow* and must have done so unconsciously. See Grover Smith, *T.S. Eliot and the Use of Memory* (London: Associated University Presses, 1996), 85.

enthusiasts, rapacious and incompetent professional men of all kinds".[37] On the other hand, Huxley's London-based novels of the 1920s, *Antic Hay* (1923) and *Point Counter Point* (1928), vividly captured the post-war mood of anomie, amorality and empty hedonism that can be found in modernist classics such as *The Waste Land* (1922).

By the time *Crome Yellow* was published, Huxley had begun his career in journalism, working at the *Athenaeum* under John Middleton Murray from April 1919 to October 1920, which he relied on to subsidise his literary work. At the *Athenaeum*, Huxley worked alongside the science writer J.W.N. Sullivan, whom he had first met at Garsington in June 1918.[38] In 1921, Sullivan was introduced to Aleister Crowley by the painter Nina Hamnett, and pledged himself to "the Great Work", which was to discover his "True Will".[39] At this time, Crowley was living in the Abbey of Thelema in Cefalù, Sicily, which he had established in March 1920 to practise the new religion that had been revealed to him by a supernatural entity called Aiwass, who allegedly dictated *The Book of the Law* to Crowley in 1904.[40] *Thelema* means "will" in ancient Greek, and this was the keynote of the new religion: *The Book of the Law* "lays down a simple Code of Conduct: 'Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the Law'".[41] Of course, the Abbey of Thélème appears in *Guargantua and Pantagruel* (1534) by Francois Rabelais, and its motto is also *fais ce que voudras*. Crowley acknowledged that Rabelais' novel presciently anticipated his own *Book of the Law*, but Lawrence Sutin argues that Rabelais "was no precursor of Thelema", since his Thélème relied on "spontaneous Christian faith and kindness", whereas Crowley's Thelema represented a New Aeon in which Christianity was superseded.[42] Rabelais' Thelemites can do what they will, since "men that are free, well-born, well-bred, and conversant in honest companies, have naturally an instinct and spurre that prompteth them unto vertuous actions, and withdraws them from

37 Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 309. Frye is speaking here of the targets of Menippean satire in general, not Peacock specifically, but he identifies Peacock and Huxley as Menippean satirists.

38 See David Bradshaw, "The Best of Companions: J.W.N. Sullivan, Aldous Huxley, and the New Physics", *The Review of English Studies* 47, no. 186 (May 1996): 191.

39 John Symonds, *The Great Beast: The Life and Magick of Aleister Crowley* (London: Macdonald, 1971), 253. See also Tobias Churton, *Aleister Crowley: The Beast in Berlin; Art, Sex, and Magick in the Weimar Republic* (Rochester: Inner Traditions, 2014), 169.

40 See Marco Pasi, *Aleister Crowley and the Temptation of Politics* (Durham: Acumen, 2014), 13, 17.

41 Ibid., 167n53.

42 See Lawrence Sutin, *Do What Thou Wilt : A Life of Aleister Crowley* (New York: St Martin's Press, 2000), 126 and Aleister Crowley, "The Antecedents of Thelema", accessed September 25, 2017, http://www.geocities.ws/hdbq111/hosted/antecedentsofthelema.html.

vice".[43] Although Huxley did not meet Crowley until 1930,[44] it is possible that Sullivan mentioned Crowley and his Abbey of Thelema to Huxley, and this *may* have played a part in his conception of the character of Coleman in *Antic Hay*, whose libertine lifestyle Gumbril associates with Rabelais' Abbey of Thélème.

The chief inspiration for Coleman was the composer Philip Heseltine, who was at Eton and Oxford at the same time as Huxley, and was also a guest at Garsington. Indeed, his name appears in the visitor's book with that of Lawrence on November 29, 1915, the day after Huxley's first visit.[45] At Oxford, Heseltine had showed an interest in the Society for Psychical Research (SPR), and spoke to its president Frederick Schiller, who was a tutor at Corpus Christi.

Heseltine was a friend of the composer Frederick Delius, who had dabbled in the occult while living in Paris, and collaborated with the occultist Gérard Encausse (a.k.a. Papus) on a booklet entitled *Anatomie et physiologue de l'orchestre* in 1894.[46] In 1916, Heseltine adopted the pseudonym Peter Warlock in order to contribute an article to *The Music Student*, whose editor he had maligned and thus he needed anonymity to publish in his journal. His biographer Barry Smith notes the significance of the name Warlock with its connotations of devil, demon, magus, magician, enchanter, etc.[47] A few unreliable sources claim that Heseltine was acquainted with Crowley during this period,[48] but this is impossible since Crowley spent the war in America, not returning to England until December 1919.[49] After dropping out of Oxford and University College London, Heseltine spent periods of time in Cornwall, where Lawrence was living, and it was conversations with Lawrence and the Crowley acolyte Meredith Starr in 1917 that cemented Heseltine's interest in the occult.[50] In order to avoid conscription, Heseltine spent a year in Dublin, where he met the medium Hester Dowden and Yeats, and began researching the occult in earnest. In a letter from April 1918, he reports that for the past twelve months his life has been influenced by "Elemental spirits".[51]

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43 François Rabelais, *Gargantua and Pantagruel*, trans. Sir Thomas Urquhart and Pierre Le Motteux (London: Everyman's Library, 1994), 157.

44 This will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 6.

45 See Barry Smith, *Peter Warlock: The Life of Philip Heseltine* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 81 and note 6 above.

46 See ibid., 117–118.

47 See ibid., 103.

48 See Ian Parrott, *The Crying Curlew: Peter Warlock; Family and Influences Centenary 1994* (Dysfed: Gomer Press, 1994), 44, who relies on Nigel Heseltine, *Capriol for Mother: A Memoir of Philip Heseltine* (*Peter Warlock*) (London: Thames Publishing, 1992), 75.

49 See Pasi, *Crowley*, 16.

50 See Smith, *Peter Warlock*, 116–118.

51 See ibid., 121, 129, 134–135.

When he returned to England in August 1918, Heseltine cut quite a figure, what with his "neatly trimmed Van Dyke beard, grey shirt, red tie, wide-brimmed velour black hat and tall Malacca cane with a large silver engraved knob".[52] In *Antic Hay*, Coleman refers to his goatee beard as a "beaver"; in the 1920s, there was a game, scored like tennis, which consisted in shouting "beaver" whenever a bearded man was sighted; Coleman boasts to Gumbril that his beaver has facilitated the "most admirably dangerous relations".[53] Inspired by Coleman, Gumbril buys a false beard and cultivates a new persona, the "complete Rabelaisian man", a libertine who swaggers around in a broad-brimmed velvet hat and affects a Malacca cane. "The portals of Thelema opened before him", writes the narrator, describing Gumbril in his new getup.[54] In the summer of 1922, Cecil Gray reports that he and Heseltine ran into Huxley and went for a drink at Verrey's Café on Regent Street, where Heseltine made a witty speech about his goatee that Huxley used in *Antic Hay*.[55] But Coleman's character is all God-baiting blasphemous bluster, and he does not refer to Rabelais' Thélème himself, much less Crowley's version of it. Lawrence also based a character on Heseltine, and much the same can be said of Halliday in *Women in Love* (1920). Towards the end of the 1920s, Huxley would formulate the philosophy of life worship (discussed in Chapter 2), which he propounded in the essay collection *Do What You Will* (1929), but despite this allusion to Rabelais, his chief influence at the time was Lawrence.

In *Antic Hay*, Gumbril is recovering from an unmanning affair with the raffish Myra Viveash, who was inspired by Nancy Cunard, whom Huxley had first met in 1917. Cunard was an aspiring poet and fully-fledged vamp, who frequented artistic haunts, such as the Eiffel Tower restaurant and the Café Royal. Huxley's one-sided infatuation with Cunard began in the autumn of 1922, and by the following year it had reached such a pitch that Maria made Huxley choose between the two of them; Huxley meekly followed Maria to Italy, where he rapidly wrote *Antic Hay* from June to July 1923.[56] Gumbril is another "split personality", who can accept "God as a sense of warmth about the heart" but baulks at "God as truth, God as 2 + 2 = 4".[57] The eponymous antic hay is a metaphor for the mundane distractions – the neon lights of Piccadilly Circus, the cabaret, alcohol, sex and so on – that prevent the characters from thinking

52 Ibid., 153.
53 Aldous Huxley, *Antic Hay* (London: Grafton, 1990), 49.
54 Ibid., 94–95.
55 Cecil Gray, *Peter Warlock: A Memoir of Philip Heseltine* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1938), 226.
56 See Sybille Bedford, *Aldous Huxley: A Biography* (London: Papermac, 1993), 138. Huxley's relationship with Cunard will be examined at greater length in Chapter 5.
57 Huxley, *Antic Hay*, 7.

about God, or, as Gumbril puts it, communing with the "crystal quiet" that he associates with nature, in contrast to the inferno of the town.[58]

Huxley's friendship with Sullivan was to influence his next novel *Those Barren Leaves* (1925). The protagonist, Calamy, abandons his amorous adventures in London to pursue an ascetic life of meditation and celibacy in a cabin on the Apuan Alps. The revelations of the "new physics", which will be examined in the next chapter, persuade Calamy to subscribe to an idealist worldview: "Perhaps if you spend long enough", he tells Cardan, "you see that everything that seems real is in fact entirely illusory – *maya,* in fact, the cosmic illusion".[59] But Calamy's cerebral, scientific approach to mysticism makes it unlikely that he will achieve the metaphysical insights he desires. Huxley seems to have been unhappy with the book, judging it to be "jejune and shallow and off the point" in a letter shortly after its publication,[60] and his renewed interest in mysticism, kindled by Sullivan's idealist reading of the new physics, was comprehensively quashed by a trip to India and south-east Asia from September 1925 to April 1926. In his letters from the period, Huxley attributes the poverty of India and her colonial subjugation to the religious fervour of its people, whom he characterises as "dreadfully 'spiritual' and 'other-worldly'".[61] He complains to Sydney Schiff that "India is enough to convert the most convinced believer in religion and spirituality into an ardent materialist, epicurean and atheist. What these people need is a good supply of Nietzschean missions".[62]

On returning to Italy, where Huxley was still based, he renewed his friendship with Lawrence, who would exercise a considerable influence on his work for the rest of the decade. In Huxley's next novel, *Point Counter Point* (1928), Lawrence was the inspiration for the character of Mark Rampion, an outspoken intellectual, writer and artist who comes from a working-class family in the Midlands. Rampion castigates Western civilisation for its emphasis on mind over body, reason over instinct, word over flesh. He holds up the Etruscans as exemplars of mind-body balance, and claims that they lived with their "whole being".[63] As I argue in Chapter 2, the novel marks a shift in Huxley's allegiance from Sullivan to Lawrence, from an idealist worldview that conceives of the phenomenal world as an ideal or mystical unity, to a materialist worldview that celebrates the multiplicity of the world, and attempts to depict its various

58 For more on *Antic Hay*, see Jake Poller, "Aldous Huxley's *Antic Hay*: London in the Aftermath of World War 1", *Literary London Journal* 8, no. 2 (2010).

59 Aldous Huxley, *Those Barren Leaves* (London: Vintage, 2005), 310.

60 Smith, *Letters*, 242.

61 Sexton, *Selected Letters*, 161.

62 Ibid.

63 Aldous Huxley, *Point Counter Point* (London: Grafton, 1986), 110.

aspects – scientific, religious, emotional, metaphysical, economic and so on. Examples of religion or spirituality are treated satirically or explained in terms of psychology or science. For instance, Huxley skewers the spiritual pretentions of Burlap (who is writing a book on St Francis of Assisi and hypocritically affects indifference to mundane matters such as money and sex), and represents the pseudo-mystical experiences of Marjorie Carling as resulting from physiological changes that occur in the fourth month of pregnancy. Spandrell insists that life is meaningless without metaphysical absolutes, such as good and evil, and is driven to commit a series of "diabolical" acts in order to establish the existence of God, culminating in the murder of Everard Webley. Despite the enormity of the act, Webley's murder proves to be a dispiritingly secular affair: "God's best joke", Spandrell reflects, "was not being there. Simply not there. Neither God nor the devil. For if the devil had been there, God would have been there too".[64] The body is revealed, not as the seat of the soul (as in Lawrence's philosophy), nor as the seat of sin (as in Christianity), but as a conglomeration of chemicals: "a few pounds of carbon, a few quarts of water, some lime, a little phosphorus and sulphur, a pinch of iron and silicon, a handful of mixed salts".[65]

Everard Webley, the leader of the fascist Brotherhood of British Freemen, has often been conflated with Oswald Mosley,[66] the leader of the British Union of Fascists, but as Bradshaw has pointed out Mosley was a Labour MP when Huxley wrote *Point Counter Point* and did not form the British Union of Fascists until 1932.[67] Bradshaw argues that Webley was in fact based on John Gordon Hargrave, who established the Kindred of the Kibbo Kift (KKK) in 1920, which encouraged its members to live in harmony with nature, practise woodcraft and rural pursuits, celebrated physical strength (*kibbo kift* in Old English denotes a feat of strength), and held camps for its members, who dressed in Merrie England outfits (shorts, cowls, cloaks, jerkins) and performed pagan rituals.[68]

64 Ibid., 433.

65 Ibid., 398–399.

66 See for instance, Jay Clayton, "The Modern Synthesis: Genetics and Dystopia in the Huxley Circle", *Modernism/modernity* 23, no. 4 (2016): 885 and David Garrett Izzo, "Aldous Huxley", *Review of Contemporary Fiction* 25, no. 3 (Fall 2005): 91.

67 See David Bradshaw, "Huxley's 'Tinpot Mussolini' and the KKK's 'White Fox': A New Source for Everard Webley and the Brotherhood of British Freemen", *Aldous Huxley Annual* 2 (2002): 147.

68 See ibid., 148–149; idem, "Red Trousers: *Lady Chatterley's Lover* and John Hargrave", *Essays in Criticism* 55, no. 4 (2005): 358–360; and H.F. Oxbury, "Hargrave, John Gordon (1894–1982)", in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, online ed., ed. David Cannadine, 2004, http://0-www.oxforddnb.com.catalogue.libraries.london.ac.uk/view/article/31199 (accessed Sept. 27, 2017).

While its membership was less than a thousand, there were some impressive names among its supporters, including Julian Huxley, Rabindranath Tagore, Havelock Ellis and H.G. Wells. Indeed, the KKK borrowed many of its ideas from Wells, such as the necessity of a samurai caste to institute a world government.[69] Lawrence was introduced to Hargrave's ideas via a one-time member of the KKK, Rolf Gardiner, who visited Lawrence while he was staying with the Huxleys in Les Diablerets in Switzerland in February 1928, when Huxley was completing *Point Counter Point*, but Bradshaw argues that either Lawrence or Julian Huxley would have made Huxley aware of Hargrave and the KKK in time to influence the conception of Webley.[70]

Huxley interspersed his novels with essay collections, such as *On the Margin* (1923) and *Proper Studies* (1927). In his 1929 collection *Do What You Will*, Huxley propounded a philosophy he called "life worship", which drew on Lawrence's, or rather Rampion's, ideas about harmonious living and attempted to take into account the diversity of human beings, with their inconsistent and contradictory impulses. The basic idea was that humans could somehow contrive to balance their warring impulses and drives, and achieve an "equilibrium of balanced excesses", between asceticism and indulgence, solitude and gregariousness, intellect and instinct.[71] In his essay on Lawrence, Huxley described him as a "mystical materialist" who spurned the idea of a spiritual afterlife and instead regarded the world, both animate and inanimate, as imbued with a metaphysical life-force.[72] But Huxley could not share Lawrence's animism, and rationalised religion and God in terms of psychology.[73] Nonetheless, his philosophy of life worship partakes of Lawrence's celebration of life, as opposed to afterlife; embodiment as opposed to spiritual abstraction.

Huxley was one of many writers and intellectuals in the 1920s and 30s who took an interest in eugenics, including Yeats, H.G. Wells, George Bernard Shaw, Havelock Ellis and the Fabians Beatrice and Sidney Webb. Huxley's brother Julian was a member of the British Eugenics Society, and later served as both vice-president and president. While Aldous was influenced by his biologist brother, he was independently interested in science, subscribed to specialist periodicals such as *Nature* and was clearly conversant with the work of Thomas

69 See Bradshaw, "Red Trousers", 360. Wells' conception of a world government or Open Conspiracy will be examined in the next chapter.

70 See idem, "Huxley's 'Tinpot Mussolini'", 149, 152.

71 See Aldous Huxley, "Pascal", in *CE* 2: 392. Life worship will be analysed in the next chapter.

72 See Aldous Huxley, "D.H. Lawrence", in *CE* 4: 80.

73 See Aldous Huxley, "One and Many", in *CE* 2: 317–318.

Malthus, Charles Darwin and Herbert Spencer. Among affluent eugenicists it was an article of faith, since there was no scientific evidence to support it, that the poor were responsible for dysgenic traits, such as "feeblemindedness",[74] whereas eugenically desirable traits (intelligence, moral integrity) were the preserve of the middle and upper classes.[75] Hence the discovery of the "differential birth rate" (the technical term for the alarming fecundity of the working class in comparison to their social superiors, who were more conscientious when it came to contraception) by Karl Pearson in 1906 was a source of great consternation among British eugenicists.[76] The solution, Huxley believed, lay in encouraging genetically desirable members of the population to have larger families, which was known as positive eugenics, and in preventing the genetically disadvantaged from reproducing, which was termed negative eugenics.[77] On the other hand, Huxley never joined the Eugenics Society and expressed reservations about both positive and negative eugenics. For instance, he predicted that the problem with positive eugenics would be that in a society of uniformly intelligent and gifted individuals no one would want to perform the menial work that was traditionally done by the masses,[78] and worried about the absence of a "precisely formulated standard of eugenic fitness" in the present,[79] since not only was there no consensus on what exactly constituted eugenically desirable traits, no one could demonstrate that the ones that were mooted, such as moral integrity and social usefulness, were primarily the product of heredity rather than environment, and only one of them – namely intelligence – was measurable.[80]

Huxley's anxiety about the differential birth rate went hand in hand with his concern about the homogenising effects of mass production, standardisation and democracy, which had emerged from his trip to America in 1926, and in particular his reading of Henry Ford's *My Life and Work* (1922). These fears reached their apotheosis in *Brave New World* (1932), in which the Bokanovsky Process and Podsnap's Technique produce a myriad identical human beings.

74 This was a medical term designating individuals with a mental age of six to eight.

75 See, for example, Julian Huxley's essay, "The Vital Importance of Eugenics", *Harper's Magazine*, August 1931, 324–331.

76 See Daniel J. Kevles, *In the Name of Eugenics: Genetics and the Uses of Human Heredity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 74.

77 See Aldous Huxley, "What is Happening to Our Population?", in *CE* 3: 402–403.

78 See Aldous Huxley, "A Note on Eugenics", in *CE* 2: 284. This side effect of positive eugenics is also illustrated in the Cyprus experiment in *Brave New World*.

79 See ibid., 283

80 See Richard A. Soloway, *Demography and Degeneration: Eugenics and the Declining Birthrate in Twentieth-Century Britain* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 340.

The very names are in themselves significant: the former derives from the Russian revolutionary Ivan Vasilevich Bokanovsky.[81] What was happening in the Soviet Union was just as terrifying to Huxley as what was happening in America: in both countries the individuality of industrial workers was being elided as a result of dehumanising efficiency schemes, such as rationalisation, that regarded men as machines. The name Podsnap was for Huxley eloquent of the bumptious vulgarity of the masses.[82] It is altogether apt, then, that the Bokanovsky Process and Podsnap's Technique should yield "an average of nearly eleven thousand brothers and sisters in a hundred and fifty batches of identical twins".[83] As a result of Pavlovian conditioning, each so-called individual is perfectly complacent about his or her caste, and yet, insofar as they all hold the same caste values and beliefs, such as, in the case of Deltas, a hatred of books and a mania for consumption, they are utterly shorn of individuality. Indeed, in their unrelieved uniformity, and moreover in the sheer quantity in which they are bred, the inhabitants of the World State are more akin to insects than human beings. The lower castes, in particular, are routinely likened to insects: the "leaf-green gamma girls" are compared to "aphids and ants", while the "black Semi-Morons" are described as "maggots", a "nightmare of swarming indistinguishable sameness".[84] One feels that Huxley's authorial revulsion at the teeming lower castes derives, on some level, from his fear that the poor were reproducing with obscene facility like animals or insects in the big-city slums, engendering the next generation of the "feebleminded".

Some critics argue that *Brave New World* signals Huxley's renunciation of Lawrence's influence, and that the "Savage" embodies a parody of Lawrentian primitivism, but, as I contend in the next chapter, Huxley's dystopia is a broadside on the mechanism of mass production, of behaviourism and of the mechanisation of popular culture, which was very much of a piece with Lawrence's views. At the time of writing *Brave New World*, Huxley was still a life worshipper who regarded God as an anthropomorphic projection of moods and emotions. In his 1946 foreword, he affirms that if he were to rewrite the book he would include a "third alternative" to the technocracy of the World State and the primitivism of the "savage Reservation", in which mysticism would be the religion.[85] His next novel, *Eyeless in Gaza* (1936), describes the mystical turn

81 See Peter Edgerly Firchow, *The End of Utopia: A Study of Aldous Huxley's* Brave New World (Toronto: Bucknell University Press, 1984), 83.

82 John Podsnap is a character in Dickens' *Our Mutual Friend*, who epitomises the traits of complacency and self-importance, in spite of his mediocrity.

83 Aldous Huxley, *Brave New World* (London: Vintage, 2004), 5.

84 Ibid., 54, 183–184.

85 See Aldous Huxley, foreword to *Brave New World*, xxxi.

that transformed Huxley from an "amused, Pyrrhonic aesthete",[86] whose indiscriminate satire was a measure of his scepticism, into an aspiring mystic and committed pacifist, who practised meditation and the Alexander technique.

In the meantime, Huxley had moved to Sanary-sur-Mer in France in 1930, having spent the past seven years in Italy. He was with Lawrence on his deathbed in March 1930 and edited a collection of Lawrence's letters that was published in 1932. Huxley had his first play produced, *The World of Light*, at the Royalty Theatre in 1931, which reflected his new interest in psychical research (this will be discussed in the next chapter). Huxley also wrote travel books, such as *Jesting Pilate* (1926), which was an account of his trip to India, south-east Asia and America, and in 1933 he undertook a trip to the West Indies, Guatemala and Mexico in order to gather material for *Beyond the Mexique Bay* (1934).

Huxley had begun writing *Eyeless in Gaza* in 1932, but by the autumn of 1934, when he moved back to London (he retained his house in Sanary, though, where he continued to reside part time until 1937), he was suffering from insomnia and depression and could make no headway with the novel. During this period of crisis, Huxley increasingly turned to Gerald Heard, a fellow polymath and writer whom he'd met in 1929, for consolation and advice.[87] At this time, Heard was interested in Indian philosophy and religion, and it is possible that he encouraged Huxley to meditate.[88] Having mocked *prāṇāyāma* (controlled yoga breathing) in his short story "The Claxtons" (1930), Huxley began to practise it himself in order to combat his insomnia.[89] Heard may have also introduced Huxley to F.M. Alexander.[90] The latter began his career as an actor, and developed what became known as the Alexander technique in order to treat the hoarseness and respiratory problems that had been dogging him

86 Ibid., xxx.

87 See Sawyer, *Aldous Huxley*, 91. Huxley's relationship with Heard will be examined in detail in Chapter 4.

88 See Chapter 4 for details.

89 See Smith, *Letters*, 382.

90 Bedford, *Aldous Huxley*, 312, claims it was either Heard or George Bernard Shaw who made the introduction, while Seymour asserts that it was Morrell (see Seymour, *Ottoline Morrell*, 300). In his biography of Alexander, Jones claims that Alexander hated Heard, making it less likely that Heard was the conduit between them (see Frank Pierce Jones, *Freedom to Change: The Development and Science of the Alexander Technique* [London: Mouritz, 1997], 56). In a letter from 1956, Huxley writes that he "heard of F.M. in 1934 or 35" and "went to see his students acting in scenes from Shakespeare, was amazed by the beauty of their posture and movements, and went to Ashley Place to take lessons". See *Aldous Huxley Annual* 15 (2015): 177.

while declaiming on stage.[91] Put simply, the technique seeks to improve physical and mental health by achieving conscious control over bad, previously unconscious, habits that lead, for example, to poor posture.[92] In Alexander's case, the bad unconscious habit had been his tendency to tilt his head back while reciting, which depressed his larynx, causing the problems outlined above: by taking conscious control of this habit, he was able to correct his posture and recite his lines with redoubled volume and vigour. The Alexander technique reinforced the holistic interdependence (rather than the Cartesian independence) of mind and body, with poor posture exercising psychological effects, while psychological problems manifested themselves in the body. Today, the Alexander technique is but one of the myriad holistic practices associated with alternative spirituality. On Alexander's advice, Huxley also sought treatment from Dr J.E.R. McDonagh, who prescribed colonic irrigation and a vegetarian diet. As a result of McDonagh's alternative therapy, the Alexander technique and meditation, Huxley had beaten his depression and insomnia by early 1936.[93]

Huxley's mystical turn was bound up with his pacifist work. In 1934, H.R.L. Sheppard (Canon of St Paul's) sent a letter to the press calling for men to send him a postcard to pledge themselves against war, and received eighty thousand by the end of the year, including one from Huxley.[94] The Peace Pledge Union (PPU) was not officially formed until May 1936, and Sheppard was helped considerably by the input of Huxley and Heard.[95] Although Huxley had been practising meditation and *prāṇāyāma*, one senses that it was a last resort to alleviate his depression and insomnia, and that he was far from a convert to yoga, say, or neo-Vedanta. The mysticism Huxley began to advocate was his best approximation of a universal religion, and he stated it in scrupulously non-sectarian terms.

The new influences in Huxley's life (Heard, Alexander and McDonagh) helped him to create the character of James Miller, the anthropologist in *Eyeless in Gaza*, and took the novel in a new direction. Miller informs the carnivorous

91 See F. Matthias Alexander, *The Use of the Self: Its Conscious Direction in Relating to Diagnosis, Functioning and the Control of Reaction* (London: Methuen, 1932).

92 See Aldous Huxley, "Education", in *CE* 4: 295–296.

93 See Murray, *Aldous Huxley*, 288. See also Smith, *Letters*, 400, in which Maria Huxley reports that Huxley began seeing Alexander in the autumn of 1935 and that his technique has had a transformative effect on her husband, vanquishing his insomnia. See also Huxley's letter from March 1936, in which he says that colonic irrigation has cured his insomnia (ibid., 402).

94 See Murray, *Aldous Huxley*, 284.

95 The precise details will be examined in Chapter 4.

Anthony Beavis that he is suffering from "chronic intestinal poisoning", which has resulted in constipation, headaches, eczema and his cynical outlook on life, and recommends a vegetarian diet.[96] He expatiates on the correlation between eating meat and petitionary prayer (which emphasises the ego) and the consequently vengeful religions that approve of both, such as Christianity, Islam and Judaism, whereas Buddhists are vegetarians and practise meditation, in which they try to transcend their self and "merge their own minds in the universal mind".[97] Inspired by Miller, who teaches him the Alexander technique, Beavis joins a pacifist organisation and tours the country, speaking at peace meetings with Miller and the founder, Rev Purchas (who was modelled on Sheppard). He begins to write a diary in which he records his struggles to slough off his old cynical intellectual elitism and to embrace instead a mystical monism, in which he envisages human beings as individual waves atop a unifying metaphysical ocean.

According to Robert de Ropp, who knew Huxley and Heard through his association with the PPU, it was around this time that Huxley attended the lectures of P.D. Ouspensky (presumably at the Theosophical Hall in Warwick Gardens, Kensington) and visited him at Lyne Place, Surrey.[98] While Ropp affirms that Huxley and Heard refused to accept Ouspensky's theories, some scholars have argued that Ouspensky exerted an influence over them. For instance, James Webb contends that Huxley and Heard visited Madame Ouspensky "several times", though he does not provide any supporting evidence, and Huxley's published letters make no reference to Ouspensky or Lyne Place.[99] Gerald Heard writes that he and Huxley "attended several of Ouspensky's semi-secret meetings" and were "invited down to the organization's country seat", which implies a single visit to Lyne Place, and records rather disparagingly that Ouspensky confessed that in all his years of teaching the Fourth Way, none of his students had mastered the system.[100] Ropp reports one occasion when Huxley, after being shown the extensive food stores in the basement at Lyne Place, declared "that Madame's teachings consisted of a mixture of nirvana and strawberry jam", which does not sound as if he took the Fourth Way very seriously.[101] "It was

96 Huxley, *Eyeless*, 371.

97 Ibid., 373.

98 Ropp, *Warrior's Way* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1980), 87, 97–98. Ouspensky moved to Lyne Place in 1936; see Gary Lachman, *In Search of P.D. Ouspensky: The Genius in the Shadow of Gurdjieff* (Wheaton: Quest Books, 2006), 230.

99 James Webb, *The Harmonious Circle: The Lives and Work of G.I. Gurdjieff, P.D. Ouspensky, and Their Followers* (Boston: Shambhala, 1987), 401.

100 Gerald Heard, "The Poignant Prophet", *The Kenyon Review* 27, no. 1 (1965): 56.

101 Ropp, *Warrior's Way*, 115.

the sort of airy witticism one expected from the old cynical Aldous", writes Ropp, "who continued to exist under the skin of the earnest being who was trying to take his place".[102] Webb maintains that the message of *Ends and Means* (1937) that "The ideal man is the non-attached man" is somehow indebted to Ouspensky,[103] when this philosophy can be found in Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity and Taoism.[104] Furthermore, Webb unconvincingly argues that the character of Mr Propter in *After Many a Summer* (1939) is based on Ouspensky, and that in Propter's conversation can be found "hints" of Gurdjieff's "objective morality".[105] It is surely more likely that both Gurdjieff and Ouspensky borrowed ideas (e.g. non-attachment) from sources that Huxley and Heard (the most credible model for Propter[106]) also drew upon.

As a sponsor for the PPU, Huxley spoke at public assemblies across the country, attended committee meetings concerned with the movement's aims and strategy, and wrote anonymous pacifist pamphlets as well as editing *The Encyclopaedia of Pacifism* (1937).[107] His emphasis on the necessity for "spiritual exercises" that should be performed by members of the PPU,[108] such as group meditation, met with internal resistance from secular pacifists. Huxley argued that a peaceable society could not be imposed in a top-down manner but could only be organically achieved from the bottom up, by securing peace in the hearts and minds of its citizens.[109] Furthermore, the PPU was not having the impact that Huxley had hoped for, having garnered just over a hundred thousand pledges, and he rapidly became disillusioned with the movement (see Chapter 4 for a more detailed analysis).

In April 1937, Huxley and Heard left England for a pacifist lecture tour of America and ended up settling in California. Maria had been anxious to find an American university for their son Matthew, so he would be sheltered from

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102 Ibid.

103 Webb, *Harmonious Circle*, 401.

104 See Aldous Huxley, "Goals, Roads, and Contemporary Starting-point", in *CE* 4: 331.

105 Webb, *Harmonious Circle*, 401.

106 In a deleted portion of the *Paris Review* interview with George Wickes and Ray Frazer, Huxley admits the resemblance between Propter and Heard. See the 2009 Aldous Huxley Collection in the Charles E. Young Research Library at UCLA, box 4.

107 The archives of the PPU contain records of the Sponsors' Meetings, in which Huxley proved himself an energetic participant. For instance, on Oct. 14, 1936, Huxley reports on the first meeting of the literary committee, at which it was decided to compile an encyclopaedia of pacifism; on Oct. 28, 1936, Huxley reports that "pamphlets on Spain and Civil War and on Sanctions will shortly be ready". For Huxley's anonymous pacifist pamphlets, see *Pacifism and Philosophy: An Aldous Huxley Reader*, ed. William Hetherington (London: Peace Pledge Union, 1994).

108 See Aldous Huxley, *What Are You Going to Do About It? The Case for Constructive Peace* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1936), 31.

109 See ibid.

the impending European war, and Huxley was attracted by the potential to make money in Hollywood, though in practice he found the work uncongenial and only three of his screenplays went into production. In America, he wrote *Ends and Means*, which was a formal elaboration of the pacifist arguments he had advanced for the PPU and in *Eyeless in Gaza*. Here Huxley demonstrates a robust awareness of mystical texts from the Christian, Buddhist, Hindu and Taoist traditions, and begins to draw a bead on the mysticism that he will subsequently term the Perennial Philosophy. The best mystics, Huxley argues, transcend the particular dogmas and deities of their traditions, and make contact with an impersonal godhead, and the ethics and values they derive from this "integrating principle" are remarkably consistent.[110] He deplores *bhakti marga*, or the path of devotion, in Mahayana Buddhism, Hinduism and above all Christianity, which promote a self-aggrandising relationship between the individual and her personal God through petitionary prayer.[111] At the time of writing, Huxley argues, this devotional spirit was increasingly directed at charismatic dictators, such as Hitler, Mussolini and Stalin, or the deified nations they represented; what united these demagogues was their insistence that ends justified the means, that social justice could be achieved through violent revolution, that peace could be achieved through war; whereas Huxley's contention was that means determined ends, and that violent means could never produce peace or equality, but would inevitably lead to violent retribution, inequality and war.[112] Huxley advocates *jñana marga*, the path of knowledge, instead, which aims to transcend the ego through meditation and to achieve identity or unity with ultimate reality.[113]

Despite his burgeoning interest in mysticism, Huxley continued to stay abreast of developments in psychical research, and one of the stops on his lecture tour with Heard was Duke University, where J.B. Rhine had his ESP laboratory.[114] He consolidated his knowledge of Eastern mysticism through his association with Swami Prabhavananda, the head of the Vedanta Society for Southern California, whom he met in 1939. Unlike his fellow expatriate Christopher Isherwood, Huxley never became a formal disciple of Prabhavananda, although he contributed to the magazine *Vedanta for the West* and gave occasional talks at the Vedanta Center at 1946 Ivar Avenue. Huxley first met Isherwood in 1939: he became a close friend and they collaborated on the film

110 See Aldous Huxley, "Beliefs", in *CE* 4: 375, 380.

111 See Aldous Huxley, "Religious Practices", in ibid., 344–350.

112 See ibid., 350–351 and idem, "Beliefs" in ibid., 375–376.

113 See Huxley, "Beliefs", in ibid., 378.

114 See Sawyer, *Aldous Huxley*, 102. Huxley's relationship with Rhine will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

treatment *Jacob's Hands* (written in 1944 but not published till 1998), a fable about a man with the gift of healing, and Huxley sent Isherwood early versions of *Time Must Have a Stop* (1944) and *Island* (1962) in order to ask his advice.

Another important spiritual contact Huxley made at this time was Jiddu Krishnamurti, the former messiah of the Theosophical Society (TS). Since 1922, Krishnamurti had been experiencing episodes of mystical union, and these had enabled him to formulate his own philosophy that was incompatible with the occultism of Theosophy. After renouncing his role as World Teacher of the TS in 1929, Krishnamurti had built up a large audience of spiritual seekers who came to hear him speak in America, Europe and India. Huxley was greatly impressed with Krishnamurti's mystical philosophy, and he contributed a foreword to *The First and Last Freedom* (1954), an edited collection of Krishnamurti's talks. He also drew consolation from Krishnamurti's pacifist convictions during World War II when Huxley felt guilty for once again avoiding the European conflict. Several of Huxley's critics had been bewildered by the mystical turn in his work and attacked him for mystic navel-gazing in a time of national emergency, despite the fact that, given his age (45 at the outbreak of war) and his damaged eyesight, fighting was out of the question.[115] Furthermore, Krishnamurti was a good friend at a time of tension in Huxley's relationship with Heard. Huxley felt that Heard was making a mistake by promoting himself as a guru, lecturing at the Vedanta Center as well as Baptist and Quaker venues, in addition to establishing a spiritual community, Trabuco College, in the Hills behind Laguna Beach in 1942. Krishnamurti's philosophy derived from his mystical experiences, whereas Heard lacked this foundation for his own teaching. And unlike Prabhavananda, who kept a shrine at the Vedanta Center that contained relics of Ramakrishna, Krishnamurti attacked devotionalism, and argued that the individual had to hew her own path to enlightenment without the crutch of deities, gurus or organised religions.[116] Krishnamurti's rejection of organised religion and his emphasis on self-development proved attractive to New Age spiritual seekers and has earned him a place in the pantheon of alternative spirituality.

Mr Propter, the mystic in Huxley's first American novel *After Many a Summer*, is chiefly influenced by the Christian mystical tradition, and practises mental prayer. He expounds an austere mystical philosophy that equates good with eternity and evil with time, with the corollary that only mystics, who can transcend their egos and apprehend ultimate reality free from the obfuscations of craving and aversion, can achieve any form of goodness, while even the most

115 Specific examples will be given in Chapter 4.

116 Huxley's relationship with Krishnamurti will be examined in Chapter 4.

idealistic politicians and activists, since they are trapped in the human realm of ego and time, pursue policies that are projections of the ego, and end up merely deflecting "evil from old channels into new and slightly different channels".[117] During World War II, Huxley led a frugal existence, having moved from Los Angeles to Llano del Rio in the Mojave Desert in 1942, from where he occasionally visited Krishnamurti in Ojai and Heard's spiritual community at Trabuco. His newfound asceticism was reflected in the work he produced during this period. His next book, *Grey Eminence* (1941), was a biography of the Catholic mystic Father Joseph. The function of mystics, Huxley argues, is to dispel the ignorance of our benighted world by letting in the light of ultimate reality. A world without mystics, he writes, would be "totally blind and insane", and he laments that at present "[w]e are dangerously far advanced into the darkness".[118]

Sebastian Barnack, the hero of *Time Must Have a Stop*, blinds himself to spiritual reality through sex and literature. But he comes to regard his gift for poetry as a "distraction" from realising his identity with the "divine Ground",[119] and his sensuality is revealed as a desperate substitute for self-transcendence. Just as scientists adopt a working hypothesis to guide their research into "sense-experience", so, Barnack argues, a working hypothesis is required as a guide to "spiritual experience". His "minimum working hypothesis" has six tenets:

> That there is a Godhead or Ground, which is the unmanifested principle of all manifestation.
> That the Ground is transcendent and immanent.
> That it is possible for human beings to love, know and, from virtually, to become actually identified with the Ground.
> That to achieve this unitive knowledge, to realize this supreme identity, is the final end and purpose of human existence.
> That there is a Law or Dharma, which must be obeyed, a Tao or Way, which must be followed, if men are to achieve their final end.
> That the more there is of I, me, mine, the less there is of the Ground; and that consequently the Tao is a Way of humility and compassion, the Dharma a Law of mortification and self-transcending awareness.[120]

117 Aldous Huxley, *After Many a Summer* (London: Vintage, 2015), 118.
118 Aldous Huxley, *Grey Eminence* (London: Vintage, 2005), 87–88.
119 This is Huxley's nondenominational term for the godhead, which he borrowed from Meister Eckhart, and which he uses throughout *The Perennial Philosophy*.
120 Huxley, *Time*, 282–283.

Barnack's "minimum working hypothesis" is akin to Huxley's conception of the Perennial Philosophy, which was a distillation of the ethical and metaphysical teachings of the great mystics and formed the subject of his next book. *The Perennial Philosophy* (1945) is an anthology of mystical texts from all the religious traditions over two millennia, from the *Bhagavad Gita* (c. 500 BCE–500 CE) and the *Upanishads* (c. 800–400 BCE), to the Bardo Thödol (c. eighth century CE), *The Cloud of Unknowing* (c. fourteenth century CE) and the Book of Common Prayer, including Christian saints (St John of the Cross, William Law, St Teresa of Avila), Taoist sages (Laozi and Zhuangzi), Sufi mystics (Rumi), Hindu philosophers (Shankara), and Buddhist poets (Ashvaghosha). The book was born from Huxley's conviction that only a shared theology afforded the basis for a lasting peace, and that the mysticism of the Perennial Philosophy provided this.[121] Moreover, the fact that these saints and sages, from different eras, continents and religious traditions, had produced teachings that were broadly compatible, was for Huxley empirical evidence that there existed a divine unified Ground beyond the phenomenal world of diversity. The only difference, he believed, between the Hindu *brahman*, the Christian Logos and the Tao, was the nomenclature.[122]

Despite Huxley's refusal to play disciple to Prabhavananda's guru, *The Perennial Philosophy* endorses the philosophy of neo-Advaita, which emphasises the transcendent aspect of the godhead, *brahman*, and dismisses the phenomenal world as *maya* (this will be dealt with in more detail in Chapter 5), and is perhaps responsible for the world-denying asceticism of Propter and Bruno Rontini (the mystic in *Time Must Have a Stop*). In June 1945, Huxley purchased a chalet in the mountain village of Wrightwood, six thousand feet above sea level, although he retained the house at Llano until 1947. He moved back to Los Angeles in 1949, purchasing a house on North King's Road.[123] In the novels Huxley wrote after World War II, he began to move away from the renunciation implicit in neo-Advaita, and became increasingly interested in those religious philosophies that emphasised immanence over transcendence, such as Taoism, Tantra and Mahayana and Zen Buddhism. For example, in *Ape and Essence* (1948), there is a perceptible Taoist influence, with several references to the "Order of Things", which Huxley uses as a synonym for the Tao.[124] The novel is set in the twenty-second century, a hundred years after a nuclear war has set

121 See Huxley's letter to his editor Cass Canfield in Smith, *Letters*, 502.

122 The Perennial Philosophy will be analysed in detail in Chapter 3.

123 See Murray, *Aldous Huxley*, 462–463.

124 This will be examined in Chapter 5.

humankind catastrophically out of kilter with the Tao, and the population of Los Angeles worship Belial. Here Alfred Poole discovers the Tao, not by transcending his ego and the world of *maya*, but in the landscape of Los Angeles and in his love for Loola. Likewise, in *The Genius and the Goddess* (1955), Huxley appears to derive the concept of "animal grace", or the perfect functioning of the organism as a result of living in harmony with the "Order of Things", from Taoism.[125] In the interim, Huxley wrote *The Devils of Loudun* (1952), a non-fiction book about the demonisation of the seventeenth-century priest Urbain Grandier, which was subsequently made into a film by the director Ken Russell.

From *Time Must Have a Stop* onwards, Huxley had been arguing that man's "final end" is to achieve "unitive knowledge" of the godhead.[126] The experience of mystical union, however, is only possible for a tiny portion of the population, and Huxley was frustrated by his failure to achieve this through the conventional techniques of meditation and asceticism. In 1953, he began to research the effects of mescaline in medical journals, hoping that it might enable him to apprehend the world in the manner of mystics and visionary artists such as Blake, and in May of that year he took mescaline for the first time under the supervision of the psychiatrist Humphry Osmond. In the wake of this experience, he wrote a wide-ranging disquisition on the subject, *The Doors of Perception*. Under the influence of mescaline, the mundane objects of the phenomenal world were transfigured, imbued with preternatural vividness and significance. Although Huxley insisted that his mescaline experience was not the same as enlightenment or mystical union, it nonetheless had some elements in common with it, such as the transcendence of the self and an identification with the divine Ground, or rather with objects, such as the legs of his chair, as manifestations of the divine Ground, or what in *Doors of Perception* Huxley refers to as "Mind at Large". In order to explain the effects of mescaline, Huxley posits Henri Bergson's filter theory of mind (see Chapter 2) and maintains that, while all human beings have potential access to "Mind at Large", it has to be filtered through the "reducing valve" of the brain; as a result of taking mescaline, the reducing valve is widened, admitting a greater portion of "Mind at Large".[127] In some cases, this leads to ESP; in others to a transfiguration of the outside world, as was the case with Huxley; for some people, a state of

125 Again, this will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 5.

126 See for instance the penultimate tenet of Barnack's minimum working hypothesis above; Huxley, *Perennial Philosophy*, 154 and idem, foreword to *Brave New World*, xxxi.

127 Aldous Huxley, *Doors of Perception*, in *CE* 5: 163–164.

"egolessness" is attained in which "there is an 'obscure knowledge' that All is in all – that All is actually each".[128]

The mescaline experience, then, powerfully reinforced the immanence of the godhead, as opposed to its transcendence, and as a result Huxley began to embrace the world-affirming traditions of Tantra, Zen and Mahayana Buddhism (see Chapter 5 for details). Moreover, in subsequent experiments with mescaline and LSD after the publication of the book, Huxley believed he'd been vouchsafed genuine mystical experience, and concluded that the aesthetic and visionary experiences that characterised his first session with Osmond were mere distractions "from the central reality", that is of "Love as the primary and fundamental cosmic fact".[129]

In *Heaven and Hell* (1956), a companion essay to *The Doors of Perception*, Huxley examines another facet of the mescaline experience, namely that, for some people, it gives access to an "Other World" of inner visionary experience with the eyes closed, composed of brilliant kaleidoscopic images. These visions, Huxley posits, derive from the collective unconscious, and are characterised by intense colours, lights and internal significance. In this respect, visionary experience resembles descriptions of the heavens and fairylands of folklore and myth, such as the Garden of the Hesperides, Eden, Avalon, Elysium, the Islands of the Blest. The reason, Huxley speculates, that we prize gemstones in this world, such as diamonds and rubies, is that they remind us of the unearthly luminosity of the Other World we unconsciously glimpse at our mind's antipodes.[130] For some people, on the other hand, psychedelic substances transport them not to a visionary heaven but to a visionary hell, revealing an "Indwelling Horror", rather than a divine immanence.[131] *The Doors of Perception* and *Heaven and Hell* catalysed considerable counterculture interest in Hindu philosophies, such as Tantra and Zen Buddhism, and exerted a great influence on the psychologist Timothy Leary, who met and corresponded with Huxley and refused to heed his prophetic warning that widespread use of psychedelic substances among the general public would lead to their prohibition (see Chapter 6 for details). On the other hand, more conservative critics attacked the book, most notably R.C. Zaehner, who argued in *Mysticism, Sacred and Profane* (1957) that Huxley's mescaline experiences were different in kind, rather than degree, from genuine mystical union (see Chapter 6 for details).

128 Ibid., 165.

129 From a letter to Osmond on Oct. 25, 1955, in Smith, *Letters*, 769. See Chapter 6 for further details.

130 See Aldous Huxley, *Heaven and Hell*, in CE 6: 12–13.

131 Ibid., 28.

Huxley's psychedelic experiments were preceded by a renewed interest in psychical research and alternative therapies. In December 1950, Huxley and Maria began to experiment with dianetics, which was a self-help psychology created by the science-fiction writer L. Ron Hubbard. Much like Freud, Hubbard maintained that there was a conscious "analytical mind" and an unconscious "reactive mind". Traumatic events from childhood, the pre-natal state and even past lives were stored in the reactive mind in the form of "engrams", and could produce all kinds of mental and psychosomatic distress. The purpose of dianetics was to purge these engrams from the reactive mind through the "auditing" process, producing a state of optimal mental health known as "clear".[132] In a letter to Maria's sister Jeanne (December 30, 1950), Huxley reports that while "Maria has had some success in contacting and working off engrams and has been back repeatedly into what the subconscious says is the pre-natal state", Huxley himself was "completely resistant" to the auditing process.[133] Huxley describes Hubbard as "curiously repellent physically" and "a very queer fellow – very clever, rather immature and in some ways rather pathetic".[134] Huxley and Maria also tried "E-Therapy", developed by the psychotherapist and Buddhist scholar A.L. Kitselman in the 1950s. The aim of the therapy is to bypass the conscious ego and access the unconscious or what Huxley terms the "beneficent not-self" in order to solve mental or psychosomatic problems. The subject is put into a "light hypnotic trance" and guided by an observer, facilitating the release of repressed memories, physical tension, "symbolic imagery", intuitive answers to urgent problems.[135] Maria writes to her sister that

> Aldous is transfigured and this, I think, is due to E-Therapy. I have a rapport with my E, I know it is all true [...] but Aldous was blocked and it took him a long time to reach his E, his deeper inner self. This therapy is a simple and rapid way to the recommendations of the saints.[136]

In the early 1950s, Huxley and Maria held regular Tuesday-night gatherings at their house on North Kings Road, at which the guests observed or participated in hypnotism, séances and various psi phenomena. In 1952, Maria was

132 See Dorthe Refslund Christensen, "Scientology", in *Dictionary of Gnosis and Western Esotericism*, ed. Wouter J. Hanegraaff *et al.* (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 1047–1048.

133 Reproduced in Stan Lauryssens, *My Brave New World: The Life and Loves of Maria and Aldous Huxley* (n.p., 2017), chap. 3, Kindle.

134 Ibid.

135 Smith, *Letters*, 648, 650.

136 Quoted in Lauryssens, *My Brave New World*, chap. 3.

diagnosed with breast cancer and had a mastectomy and radiation treatment. It is perhaps no coincidence that around this time she and Huxley became specially interested in the possibility of post-mortem survival. Early psychical researchers, such as F.W.H. Myers and Oliver Lodge, had been keen to prove the existence of a mind or soul that could survive the death of the body after suffering the loss of loved ones.[137] At any rate, the Tuesday-evening sessions stopped just prior to Maria's death in February 1955.

The following year, Huxley married the former violinist and psychotherapist Laura Archera, and moved to a new house in Deronda Drive, Los Angeles. Huxley gave a series of lectures at the University of California, Santa Barbara, in 1959 and at MIT in 1960, in which he addressed the subject of "human potentialities". In order to achieve our full potential, Huxley proposed new forms of education that made allowance for the different types of human being. Huxley had long subscribed to William Sheldon's classification of three body types: the soft fat endomorph; the large-boned muscular mesomorph; and the small-boned lanky ectomorph; these body types are correlated with three temperaments (viscerotonia, somatotonia and cerebrotonia respectively), that would benefit, Huxley argued, from different kinds of education.[138] He also championed what he called "nonverbal" forms of education, such as the Alexander technique and the Bates method, which took a less Cartesian view of the mind-body gestalt, both of which would be subsequently practised under the banner of alternative spirituality.[139] Richard Price heard one of Huxley's "human potentialities" lectures in 1960 and was inspired to establish the Esalen Institute, a centre for alternative spirituality in Big Sur, California (see Chapter 6 for more details). At Esalen, as well as in the counterculture of the late 1960s and 70s, Huxley's notion of the Perennial Philosophy, and his contention that psychedelic drugs could serve as a conduit for spiritual experience, had great currency.

In *Island*, Huxley's final novel, he depicts a utopian society that has adopted many of the "nonverbal" forms of education he had been advocating in his lectures and essays. The Palanese practise a mixture of Tantra, Zen and Mahayana Buddhism, but these traditions are not indoctrinated, rather its citizens

137 See Jeffrey J. Kripal, *Authors of the Impossible: The Paranormal and the Sacred* (London: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 88 and Jake Poller, "Beyond the Subliminal Mind: Psychical Research in the Work of Aldous Huxley", *Aries* 15 (2015): 251–253.

138 See "Human Potentialities", in *The Humanist Frame*, ed. Julian Huxley (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1961), 421–422.

139 Huxley had learnt the Bates method in 1939 in an attempt to improve his ravaged eyesight and wrote a book on the subject, *The Art of Seeing* (1942).

are encouraged to make their own experiments with the *moksha*-medicine (psilocybin mushrooms). In *The Perennial Philosophy*, Huxley had noted that whereas Theravada Buddhists cherish the ideal of the *arhat*, who achieves *nirvana* by renouncing the world, concentrating on the "heights within" through meditation, Mahayana Buddhists celebrate the *bodhisattva*, who achieves *nirvana* "in and through the world as well as in and through the soul", and elects to remain in *samsara* in order to help others along the spiritual path.[140] For the *bodhisattva*, "samsara and Nirvana, time and eternity, are one and the same".[141] With the help of mescaline, Huxley was able to apprehend this paradox, and whereas his previous fictional mystics, such as Mr Propter, were tremendously austere and regarded secular reforms as futile, Huxley came in his later work to celebrate the body and the world as emanations of the divine Ground. Consequently, in *Island*, *maithuna*, the yoga of love, is regarded as a sacrament, rather than as a barrier to spiritual progress; only the Rani and her son Murugan, who are Theosophists, regard sex as profane. And while Huxley had previously proclaimed that "unitive knowledge" of the godhead was the ultimate goal, the emphasis in *Island* is unmistakably this-worldly, and consequently the Palanese attempt to make the best of *samsara* by employing science (contraception, positive eugenics, breeding more vigorous strains of cattle and crops), realising their human potentialities through nonverbal education, and practising mindfulness with the help of the mynah birds who constantly call "Attention" and "Here and now".

In May 1960, Huxley was diagnosed with cancer of the tongue and received radium treatment. The following year, his house in Deronda Drive was consumed by a fire that had spread from the canyon below, and the only thing Huxley managed to save was his novel in progress, *Island*, and a handful of suits. As a result, a large volume of his correspondence was lost, as well as his diaries and the manuscripts of two unfinished novels.[142] Huxley's last book, *Literature and Science* (1963), was his contribution to the debate between C.P. Snow and F.R. Leavis about the relative importance of science and the humanities, with Huxley arguing that literary authors should take an active interest in scientific research and help to disseminate advances in technology to the general public. In 1962, Huxley began to suffer from cancer in the glands of his neck; he had one of them removed and underwent more radium treatments, but these provided only a temporary remission and he died on

140 See Huxley, *Perennial Philosophy*, 62, 66.
141 Ibid., 62.
142 See Murray, *Aldous Huxley*, 438, 447.

November 22, 1963.[143] On his deathbed, he asked Laura to administer an injection of LSD, which she did; she spent the next few hours urging him to embrace the light, in the manner of the Bardo Thödol, as Huxley had done for his first wife Maria.[144] In a letter to Julian and Juliette Huxley, Laura writes that when taking LSD in the past, Huxley's face would take on "this immense expression of complete bliss and love", and reports that all those present agreed that Huxley's passing "was the most serene, the most beautiful death".[145]

143 See ibid., 448, 454.

144 See Laura Archera Huxley, *This Timeless Moment: A Personal View of Aldous Huxley* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1968), 286.

145 Letter from Laura Huxley, Dec. 8, 1963, in the Huntington Library Collections, CI 1001.

CHAPTER 2

Science, Alternative Spirituality and Psychical Research

Huxley's mantra, in his later years, was that we must make the "best of both worlds", the "world of science and the world of religion and metaphysics".[1] But during the 1920s, his attitude to science, much like his attitude to religion and metaphysics, vacillated between aversion and attraction. Huxley's ambivalence is perhaps understandable when seen in light of his family background: on the one hand, his grandfather T.H. Huxley was an outspoken advocate of evolutionary theory, and championed the necessity of scientific education; on the other hand, his granduncle was the poet and essayist Matthew Arnold, who defined culture as "the best that has been thought and known" and pitted its "sweetness and light" against the "mechanical and material civilisation" he regarded as its enemy.[2] In fact, T.H. Huxley took issue with Arnold's parochial conception of culture and argued that a classical education was no longer able to furnish a "complete theory of life", as Arnold contended. Furthermore, science "appeals not to authority, nor to what anybody may have thought or said, but to nature [...] and bids the learner seek for truth not among words but among things".[3] While T.H. Huxley was an agnostic and asserted that "nothing interferes" in the order of the world,[4] Arnold's speaker in the poem "Dover Beach" (1867) laments the "long, withdrawing roar" of the "sea of Faith" and describes the industrial world as containing "neither joy, nor love, nor light, / Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain", and portrays humanity as stranded on "a darkling plain".[5]

For Aldous Huxley, there was no question of disavowing the scientific legacy of his grandfather or the more spiritual culture of his granduncle, but there was, at least in the 1920s and 30s, a discernible tension between the two. In what follows, I analyse Huxley's brief adoption of an idealist worldview, primarily as the result of his friend J.W.N. Sullivan's interpretation of the "new

1 Huxley, "Mother", in *CE* 5: 345.

2 Matthew Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1932), 49, 70.

3 T.H. Huxley, "Science and Culture", in *Science and Culture and Other Essays* (New York: D. Appelton, 1882), 15, 21–22.

4 Ibid., 21.

5 Matthew Arnold, "Dover Beach", in *Dover Beach and Other Poems* (New York: Dover Thrift, 1994), 86.

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physics", and connect this to the creation of Huxley's first mystical seeker, Calamy in *Those Barren Leaves* (1925). I contest Lothar Fietz's assertion that Huxley's development of perspectivism in *Point Counter Point* (1928) and his philosophy of life worship was inspired by the much later multiverse theory associated with Erwin Schrödinger. I examine the influence of D.H. Lawrence and William Blake on the philosophy of life worship that Huxley propounded in *Do What You Will* (1929). I contest David Bradshaw's thesis that Huxley was a Wellsian fellow traveller when he wrote *Brave New World* (1932) and that the novel represents Huxley's endorsement of a scientific world state. Finally, I investigate the influence of psychical research on Huxley's work, and how he envisaged it as a possible bridge between science and spirituality.

Idealism, the New Physics and Perspectivism

In his early work, Huxley impartially satirised scientists, artists and would-be mystics. For instance, in *Antic Hay* (1923), the physiologist Shearwater is so preoccupied with his study of the kidneys that he refuses to take an interest in the subject of love, and is consequently cuckolded by Gumbril and Coleman. Lypiatt, on the other hand, is an apostle of culture, a poet and painter whose epic pretensions Huxley lampoons. Then there is Gumbril Junior, who craves the "crystal quiet" behind the uproar of contemporary life and seeks a sort of nature mysticism in the Sussex countryside, but fears that he is but a "dingy Romain Rolland, hopelessly trying to pretend" that he has the "great spiritual experiences, which the really important people do feel and have".[6] David Bradshaw opines that at this time Huxley was eager to "slough an intellectual inheritance which he found oppressive", and claims that the opening chapter of *Crome Yellow* (1921) is "a clear satire on the Einstein craze".[7] But the evidence he advances is a little tenuous, the gist being that trains were often used in illustrations of relativity theory, and Denis takes a train to Crome, frets about the time it takes, and "construe[s] space old-fashionedly as a kind of etherial permanent way", as opposed to the bent space-time of Einstein.[8]

It was not until *Those Barren Leaves* (1925) that Huxley began to take a sustained interest in science and mysticism.[9] Bradshaw notes that J.W.N. Sullivan

6 Huxley, *Antic Hay*, 226.

7 Bradshaw, "The Best of Companions" (May 1996), 195–196.

8 Ibid., 196.

9 There are briefer mentions of both in Huxley's *Little Mexican* (1924) collection, especially the novella "Uncle Spencer", in which the narrator notes, "Now it is possible – it is, indeed, almost

was a guest at Huxley's home in Florence in April 1924, when Huxley began work on the novel, and that Sullivan was especially preoccupied with the "new physics" during this period.[10] In 1924, the "new physics" comprised Einstein's relativity theory and wave-particle duality (Werner Heisenberg and Niels Bohr were yet to formulate the Copenhagen interpretation, which will be discussed below). While Einstein had published his General Theory of Relativity in 1915, it was not widely embraced by the scientific community until a solar eclipse in 1919 afforded the opportunity of observing the bent passage of starlight through the sun's gravitational field, as predicted by Einstein.[11] Sullivan had allegedly studied mathematics at University College London, and wrote a number of articles for the *Athenaeum* on relativity, which can be found in the collection *Aspects of Science* (1923).[12] In the latter, he states there is no evidence that Einstein has any sympathy with mysticism, but affirms that in light of relativity theory "philosophic idealism" is a more persuasive hypothesis than the "naïve realism which takes atoms as being 'really there'".[13]

Around this time, there were several prominent scientists who advanced an idealist interpretation of relativity, including Arthur Eddington, J.B.S. Haldane and James Jeans. It would seem that Sullivan was influenced by Eddington, who was the Plumian chair of astronomy at Cambridge University, and whose observations of the solar eclipse in May 1919 had helped to confirm Einstein's theory of General Relativity.[14] In a letter to the editor and critic John Middleton Murray, Sullivan quotes from Eddington's book *Space, Time and Gravitation* (1920):

> Mind exalts the permanent and ignores the transitory; and it appears from the mathematical study of relations that the only way in which mind can achieve her object is by picking out one particular quality [i.e. matter] as the permanent substance of the perceptual world, partitioning a perceptual space and time for it to be permanent in, and, as a necessary consequence of this Hobson's choice, the laws of gravitation and

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necessary – for a man of science to be also a mystic", which foreshadow the theme of *Those Barren Leaves*.

10 Bradshaw, "Best of Companions" (May 1996), 204–206.

11 Ibid., 193, 197.

12 I say "allegedly" as Sullivan, perhaps embarrassed by his working-class background, misled Huxley and others about his education. See ibid., 189–190.

13 J.W.N. Sullivan, *Aspects of Science: Second Series* (London: W. Collins, 1926), 36–38.

14 See C.W. Kilmister, "Eddington, Sir Arthur Stanley (1882–1944)", *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, May 2010; accessed Aug. 3, 2017, http://oxforddnb.com.catalogue.libraries.london.ac.uk/view/article/32967.

> mechanics and geometry have to be obeyed. Is it too much to say that mind's search for permanence has created the world of physics?[15]

In his subsequent book, *The Nature of the Physical World* (1927), Eddington was even more explicit about his idealist worldview:

> the stuff of the world is mind-stuff. [...] The mind-stuff of the world is, of course, something more general than our individual conscious minds; but we may think of its nature as not altogether foreign to the feelings in our consciousness. The realistic matter and fields of force of former physical theory are altogether irrelevant – except in so far as the mind-stuff has itself spun these imaginings.[16]

Alan Batten emphasises the importance of Eddington's Quaker background, which was congenial to mysticism; he quotes the following passage from *Nature of the Physical World* and claims Eddington's description of mysticism "must have been written from first-hand knowledge":

> If I were to try to put into words the essential truth revealed in the mystic experience, it would be that our minds are not apart from the world; and the feelings that we have of gladness and melancholy and our yet deeper feelings are not of ourselves alone, but are glimpses of a reality transcending the narrow limits of our particular consciousness – that the harmony and beauty of the face of Nature is at root one with the gladness that transfigures the face of man.[17]

While I disagree that the above constitutes evidence of first-hand mystical experience, I concur with Batten that Eddington's religious convictions and his sympathetic attitude to mysticism coloured his interpretations of relativity and quantum theory.[18] There is a tendentious quality to many of Eddington's assertions, and he invariably hedges his more exciting proclamations with qualifications: "The idea of a universal Mind or Logos would be, I think, a fairly

15 Sullivan quoting Eddington in Bradshaw, "Best of Companions" (May 1996), 200.

16 A.S. Eddington, *The Nature of the Physical World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1948), 276.

17 Alan H. Batten, "A Most Rare Thing: Eddington's Thinking on the Relation Between Science and Religion", *Q.J.R. astr. Soc.* 35 (1994): 252.

18 See ibid., 254. See also Egil Asprem, *The Problem of Disenchantment: Scientific Naturalism and Esoteric Discourse 1900–1939* (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 269.

plausible inference from the present state of scientific theory; at least it is in harmony with it".[19]

Another influence on Huxley, in addition to Sullivan, was the biologist J.B.S. Haldane, who was a friend of Huxley's, and whose essay "Daedalus" (1923) may well have been the inspiration for the ectogenesis (the development of embryos outside the uterus) featured in *Brave New World*.[20] "The majority of scientific men", writes Haldane,

> are now being constrained by the evidence of [Einstein's] experiments to adopt a very extreme form of Kantian idealism. The Kantian *Ding-an-sich* is an eternal four-dimensional manifold, which we perceive as space and time, but what we regard as space and what as time is more or less fortuitous.[21]

According to the two-worlds interpretation of Kant's transcendental idealism, there is a noumenal world of things in themselves and a phenomenal world of appearances or mental representations based on sensory data transmitted from the noumenal world. Kant declared that space and time were a priori forms that did not exist in themselves, but rather served to structure our phenomenal experience. The Newtonian conception of a separate, uniform space and time were shown by Einstein to be convenient fictions. In its place, Einstein posited a four-dimensional space-time continuum, which was relative with respect to the observer. This new emphasis on the observer and her frame of reference was akin to Kant's privileging of the subject over the object. Consequently, Haldane affirms that "Kantian idealism will become the basal working hypothesis of the physicist [...] just as materialism did after Newton's day".[22]

For Calamy in *Those Barren Leaves*, who retires to a cottage in the Apuan Alps at the end of the novel, it is the idealist reading of the new physics that leads him to investigate ultimate reality. "The fundamental question is this", he

19 Eddington, *Nature of the Physical World*, 338.

20 See Peter Firchow, "Science and Conscience in Huxley's *Brave New World*", *Contemporary Literature* 16, no. 3 (1975): 306–307. In addition, Firchow argues that the ectogenesis predicted by Scogan in *Crome Yellow* (1921), although published two years previously to "Daedalus", was possibly inspired by Haldane, who read an earlier version of the essay before the New College Essay Society at Oxford in 1921, where Julian Huxley was teaching, and Firchow speculates that Aldous would have heard the substance of the paper from Julian.

21 J.B.S. Haldane, "Daedalus, or Science and the Future", in *Haldane's "Daedalus" Revisited*, ed. Krishna R. Dronamraju (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 27.

22 Ibid.

tells Cardan, the arch materialist for whom the soul is the hostage of the sickly body:

> Can you talk of the soul being at the mercy of the body, can you give any kind of an explanation of mind in terms of matter? When you reflect that it's the human mind that has invented space, time and matter, picking them out of reality in a quite arbitrary fashion – can you attempt to explain a thing in terms of something it has invented itself? That's the fundamental question.[23]

According to June Deery, it is erroneous to infer an idealist model of the universe from the new physics. For instance, while the Newtonian notion of absolute time and absolute space had been refuted by Einstein, there is no scientific evidence to support the assertion that time, space and matter are merely inventions of the human mind.[24] But while Deery is adept at pointing out the mistakes in Huxley's science, she only mentions in passing the reception of the new physics in the work of Sullivan, Haldane and Eddington, on which Huxley evidently relied. Certainly, Bradshaw makes a persuasive case that it was Sullivan who was primarily responsible for Huxley's mystical interpretation of the new physics, and who furthermore convinced Huxley that novelists could not hope to be modern unless they registered the Einsteinian "revolution" in their work.[25] But *Those Barren Leaves* largely fails in this respect and betrays a lack of confidence in its treatment of mysticism. For instance, while Calamy acknowledges the necessity of austerities, such as celibacy and vegetarianism, in order to pursue the mystical path, his notion of meditation is often conflated with its opposite, thinking. He tells Mary Thriplow that he can only confirm whether, as the new physics allegedly indicates, the phenomenal world is "all mind" by thinking about it for a "long time, in freedom", implying that this is what he will be doing by himself in his Alpine retreat. "The mind must be open", he continues,

> unperturbed, empty of irrelevant things, quiet. There's no room for thoughts in a half-shut, cluttered mind. And thoughts won't enter a noisy

23 Aldous Huxley, *Those Barren Leaves*, 310.

24 See June Deery, *Aldous Huxley and the Mysticism of Science* (Macmillan: London, 1996), 60, 139.

25 See Bradshaw, "Best of Companions" (May 1996), 199–205 and the second part of Bradshaw's article in *The Review of English Studies* 47, no. 187 (August 1996): 353–354.

> mind; they're shy, they remain in their obscure hiding-places below the surface, where they can't be got at so long as the mind is full and noisy.[26]

But the point of meditation is not to still the mind so that profound thoughts can arise, but to achieve mystical union with God (in the Christian tradition) or an impersonal godhead (in Taoism and neo-Advaita). If the above is a fair representation of Calamy's meditation practice, then it is highly unlikely that he will ever achieve mystical union. As briefly noted in the introduction, it is the transcendence of the ego that affords mystics the non-rational, "intuitive modes of cognition"[27] from which their wisdom derives, it is not the product of egocentric thoughts cultivated in silence.

Perhaps one reason for the artistic failure of *Those Barren Leaves* was that Huxley was by temperament a materialist rather than an idealist. In "Varieties of Intelligence" (1927), Huxley correlates Jung's notions of the extravert and introvert attitudes with materialism and idealism respectively, and defines himself as a "moderately extraverted intellectual", whose "natural tendency is to cut the cloth of my inner life to fit the objective world of things and current ideas", whereas the introvert is galvanised by his or her subjective thoughts and imaginations about the objects of the world.[28] Consequently, the idealist philosophy of Hegel reads like balderdash for Huxley.[29] In his next novel, *Point Counter Point*, Huxley renounced the idealist position he had posited in *Those Barren Leaves*, and reverted to his native materialism.

The seeds of Huxley's method in *Point Counter Point*, which adopts a kind of Nietzschean perspectivism, can be found in Calamy's musings on his hand:

> This shape which interrupts the light – it is enough to think of it for five minutes to perceive that it exists simultaneously in a dozen parallel worlds. It exists as electrical charges; as chemical molecules; as living cells; as part of a moral being, the instrument of good and evil; in the physical world and in mind. And from this one goes on to ask, inevitably, what relationship exists between these different modes of being. What is there in common between life and chemistry; between good and evil and electrical charges; between a collection of cells and the consciousness of a caress?[30]

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26 Huxley, *Those Barren Leaves*, 294.

27 Kripal, "Mysticism", 321.

28 Aldous Huxley, "Varieties of Intelligence", in *CE* 2: 171–172.

29 See ibid., 172.

30 Huxley, *Those Barren Leaves*, 293.

In *Point Counter Point*, Huxley turns his back on ultimate reality and ambitiously depicts the multifarious perspectives afforded by the phenomenal world. For example, the music performed for the guests at Tantamount House (Bach's Suite in B minor for flute and strings), is considered from several perspectives, such as the scientific (the "scraping of the anonymous fiddlers had shaken the air in the great hall", which in turn makes Lord Edward's "*membrana tympani*" vibrate, which is translated by his brain into Bach); the mathematical (in the Badinerie "Euclidean axioms made holiday with the formulae of elementary statics. Arithmetic held a wild saturnalian kermess; algebra cut capers"); the philosophical (each part is "always alone" and asserts that "the world revolves around me" and "none of [the parts] will listen to the others"); and the metaphysical (the Sarabande is a "meditation on the beauty (in spite of squalor and stupidity), the profound goodness (in spite of all the evil), the oneness (in spite of such bewildering diversity) of the world").[31]

Lothar Fietz argues that Huxley's celebration of multiplicity and diversity at this time, both in *Point Counter Point* and the essays collected in *Do What You Will* (1929), was a response to the "emergence of quantum physics", which "marked the beginning of a new interpretation of the world in terms of a multiverse".[32] This is misleading, since the idea of a multiverse was first posited by Erwin Schrödinger in a lecture in 1952, but he never published the paper, and it was not until 1957 that Hugh Everett published his independent theory of the multiverse.[33] Fietz contends that wave-particle duality "thoroughly thwarted the idea of a one-world formula underlying the planetary, atomic and subatomic 'worlds'" and paved the way for Heisenberg's indeterminacy principle.[34] Again, Fietz appears to be reading early quantum mechanics in light of the much later many-worlds interpretation suggested by Everett. The wave-particle duality observed by Louie de Broglie in 1924 revealed that

31 Aldous Huxley, *Point Counter Point* (London: Grafton, 1986), 38, 41, 29, 30.

32 Lothar Fietz, "At the Crossroads of Science, Metaphysics and Religion: Aldous Huxley and Erwin Schrödinger", *Aldous Huxley Annual* 7 (2007): 223.

33 See John Gribbin, *Schrödinger's Kittens and the Search for Reality: Solving the Quantum Mysteries* (New York: Back Bay, 1995), 160. In a footnote, Fietz acknowledges that the many-worlds interpretation of Everett came later, but argues that the idea of the multiverse had been building since the Enlightenment, with the overthrow of the theory of correspondences, the "perspectivism" of Kant and the pluralism of William James. Even though James, as Fietz notes, coined the word "multiverse" he did not use it in the sense that we use it today, and James' pluralism is the opposite of monism, a celebration of phenomenal diversity rather than a belief that the universe creates new versions of itself when confronted with a quantum superposition of states (which will be discussed below).

34 Fietz, "At the Crossroads of Science", 223–224.

quantum particles, such as photons and electrons, also exhibited wave properties. This was demonstrated in double-slit experiments, in which photons fired at an obstructing screen with two slits were diffracted in the manner of waves, rather than particles, causing interference patterns of alternate light and dark bands on a photographic plate, in much the same way that two stones dropped in a pond exhibit interference patterns. With a single slit, the photons behave like particles, with the most light being registered directly behind the slit; it is only with two slits that the particles exhibit the wavelike interference pattern. It might be supposed that it is the effect of the photons entering the slits at the same time that causes the interference pattern. However, by the mid-1980s, it became possible to conduct the experiment one photon at a time, with the result that even though the particles entered only one of the slits, and were registered as single particles on the photographic screen, over time the single particles created the interference patterns of light and dark bands.[35] "Although each photon starts out as a particle", writes John Gribbin, "and arrives as a particle, it seems to have gone through both holes at once, interfered with itself, and worked out just where to place itself on the film to make its own minute contribution to the overall interference pattern".[36] There is no way of predicting the path an individual photon will take in the experiment, e.g. which slit it will pass through and whereabouts on the photographic plate it will impinge. En masse, though, the photons conform to statistical laws, e.g. 50 percent of them will go through one slit and 50 percent through the other.

Wave-particle duality is an example of complementarity, which was formulated by Bohr, and which held that quantum particles have complementary properties, such as the wave and particle aspects of the photon just discussed, that cannot be measured simultaneously. Closely related to complementarity was the uncertainty principle introduced by Heisenberg in 1927. The classic example is the impossibility of simultaneously measuring the momentum and position of an electron, since measuring the latter "very accurately blurs the electron's momentum, by a quantifiable amount, and vice versa".[37] This amount was determined by Heisenberg in the uncertainty principle. One of the conclusions of the Copenhagen interpretation, formulated by Bohr, Heisenberg and Max Born, was that a physical system was indeterminate before being measured. The Schrödinger's cat thought experiment was designed to illustrate the absurdity of this indeterminacy: a cat is enclosed in a box with

35 See Gribbin, *Schrödinger's Kittens*, 2–5. There are several useful videos on YouTube that clearly illustrate these experiments.

36 Ibid., 5.

37 Gribbin, *Schrödinger's Kittens*, 16.

a Geiger counter, in which there is a radioactive atom; if the latter decays and triggers the Geiger counter, a flask of poison will be smashed and the cat will die; before the system is observed, however, i.e. before someone opens the box to see if the cat is alive or dead, the cat exists in a quantum superposition of being both alive and dead; it is only when the box is opened and the system observed that the wave function (the quantum superposition) collapses into one possibility or the other.[38] The many-worlds interpretation of quantum mechanics developed by Everett was a response to the Copenhagen interpretation, and held that whenever a quantum superposition of states occurs, the universe splits, with a parallel universe being created for each quantum state (e.g. the cat being dead or alive). The multiverse theory circumvented the necessity for an observer to collapse the wave function. One of the problems of the Copenhagen interpretation was that in theory an infinite regress of observers was required: for instance, the person who opens the box will become part of the quantum superposition if he or she is alone in the room or building in which the cat experiment takes place, and the wave function will only collapse when he or she informs another observer of the outcome, and so on.[39]

Both Huxley and his characters continued to comment on the new physics. For instance, in *Point Counter Point*, Spandrell notes that the scientist Illidge, whose communism makes him a materialist, has been thrown into disarray by the revelations of "Einstein and Eddington", who are "undermining his simple faith. They're telling him that the laws of nature are useful conventions of strictly human manufacture and that space and time and mass themselves, the whole universe of Newton and his successors, are simply our own invention".[40] But Calamy's note of wonder, and the implication that the new physics has a handle on ultimate reality, is gone; instead, Huxley is eager now to point out the limitations of the scientific worldview. "Science is no 'truer' than commonsense or lunacy, than art or religion", writes Huxley in "One and Many" (1929):

> It permits us to organize our experience profitably; but tells us nothing about the real nature of the world to which our experiences are supposed to refer. From the internal reality, by which I mean the totality of psychological experiences, it actually separates us. Art, for example, deals with many more aspects of this internal reality than does science, which confines itself deliberately and by convention to the study of one very limited class of experiences – the experiences of sense. To collect records

38 See ibid., 20–22.

39 See ibid., 160–162, 22.

40 Huxley, *Point Counter Point*, 160.

> of sense experiences (particularly of those which lend themselves to description in terms of numbers), to generalize them, to draw inferences from them, to construct from them a logically harmonious scheme of description and explanation – this is the business of science. At the moment, it is worth remarking, there is no scheme that harmoniously reconciles all the facts even in the limited sphere of scientific investigation. What is sense in the sub-atomic universe is pure nonsense in the macroscopical world.[41]

However, Fietz seems to imply that Huxley's interest in multiplicity had its roots in quantum mechanics and the many-worlds interpretation that emerged much later: Huxley "wholeheartedly adopted the view of the world as a pluralistic universe or multiverse and regarded inconsistencies and dichotomies between the various reality models in physics as just another facet of the irreducible diversity multiplicity principle underlying all strata of reality".[42] As noted above,[43] the pluralism of William James cannot be conflated with the multiverse, and while Fietz points out some intriguing parallels between James' pluralism and Huxley's philosophy of life worship,[44] the latter has little or nothing in common with Schrödinger's work on quantum mechanics or the "multiverse" it suggested. What Schrödinger and Huxley had in common, as Fietz notes, is their adoption of the monistic philosophy of neo-Advaita, which conceives of the universe as *brahman*, and maintains that the phenomenal world is *maya*.[45] It should be emphasised, though, that Huxley's interest in neo-Advaita came after his mystical turn in the mid-1930s, and had nothing whatever to do with Schrödinger or quantum mechanics. Moreover, as Fietz himself acknowledges, Schrödinger's interest in neo-Advaita, and his praise for Huxley's *Perennial Philosophy* (1945), had nothing to do with his work:

> While Schrödinger's scientific research seemed to endorse a multiverse of multiplicity, he was beguiled by the Vedantic vision of a metaphysical unity underlying the phenomenal diversity of the world. In other words,

41 Aldous Huxley, "One and Many", in *CE* 2: 303.

42 Fietz, "At the Crossroads of Science", 225.

43 See note 33.

44 For an exposition of life worship (which will be discussed below), see his essay "Pascal" in *CE* 2. I would argue, *pace* Fietz, that Huxley's doctrine is closer to William Blake's notion of "states" (again, this will be dealt with in due course) than to James' pluralism.

45 See Fietz, "At the Crossroads of Science", 233.

his science did not lead him to Vedanta, it pointed him in the other direction.[46]

D.H. Lawrence (1885–1930), William Blake (1757–1827) and Life Worship

Bradshaw sees in *Point Counter Point* not merely a rejection of idealism and mysticism but an attack on Sullivan's contention that modern literature must grapple with the new physics.[47] He argues that this change of heart was in part inspired by Huxley's renewed friendship with D.H. Lawrence, whose aversion to science can be gleaned from his "mouthpiece" Rampion: "What the scientists are trying to get at is non-human truth. […] What with their quantum theory, wave mechanics, relativity and all the rest of it, they do really seem to have got a little way outside humanity. Well, what the devil's the good of that?"[48] Furthermore, Rampion is contemptuous of the Platonic idealism that privileges mind over body, word over flesh, and regards scientists as "barbarians of the intellect":

> Civilization is harmony and completeness. Reason, feeling, instinct, the life of the body – Blake managed to include and harmonize everything. Barbarism is being lop-sided. You can be a barbarian of the intellect as well as of the body. A barbarian of the soul and the feelings as well as of sensuality. Christianity made us barbarians of the soul, and now science is making us barbarians of the intellect. Blake was the last civilized man.[49]

Where Huxley, in his essay "A Night at Pietramala" (1925), had presented Isaac Newton, Michael Faraday and James Clerk Maxwell as examples of the possibility of reconciling science and religion,[50] Philip Quarles, Huxley's "mouthpiece" in *Point Counter Point*, observes that "Newton's mathematics

46 Ibid., 229.

47 See Bradshaw, "Best of Companions" (Aug. 1996), 364–365.

48 Quoted in ibid., 364. In a letter, Huxley stated that while Lawrence was "incomparably queerer and more complex" than Rampion, the latter was the "mouthpiece" for some of Lawrence's ideas. Much the same could be said of Huxley's resemblance to Philip Quarles: though Huxley is "queerer and more complex" than Quarles, the latter is a mouthpiece for many of his ideas. See Smith, *Letters*, 339–340.

49 Huxley, *Point Counter Point*, 109.

50 See Aldous Huxley, "A Night at Pietramala", in *CE* 1: 404–405.

do not prove his theology. Faraday was right about electricity, but not about Sandemanianism".[51] In the same notebook entry, Quarles notes that scientists, given their "excessive development of the purely mental functions", are bound to be inept in their domestic lives, which rely on emotion, empathy and intuition.[52] This idea is exemplified in the novel by the biologist Lord Tantamount, who is depicted as an emotional child, and whose incompetence in matters of the heart and body lead his wife to cheat on him with the painter John Bidlake.

In addition, Bradshaw argues that the character of Spandrell was inspired by Sullivan, and that Spandrell's opinion that Beethoven's quartet in A minor (opus 132) constitutes a proof of the existence of God derives from Sullivan's book *Beethoven: His Spiritual Development* (1927).[53] In the latter, though, Sullivan deems the A minor quartet as the "least mystical of Beethoven's last quartets", while he lauds the C sharp minor quartet (opus 131) as the "greatest of Beethoven's quartets", and the "one where the mystical vision is most perfectly sustained".[54] Nonetheless, it seems likely that this aspect of Spandrell was based on Sullivan, and I agree that Rampion's defeat of Sullivan at the novel's end, in which Rampion opines that the A minor quartet is "a hymn in praise of eunuchism" that extols the soul and ignores the body,[55] indicates Huxley's allegiance to "Lawrentian life worship" over Sullivan's lopsided idealism.[56]

It should be noted, though, that Huxley never shared Lawrence's contempt for science. "His dislike of science was passionate and expressed itself in the most fantastically unreasonable terms", writes Huxley. "'All scientists are liars', he would say, when I brought up some experimentally established fact, which he happened to dislike. 'Liars, liars!' It was a most convenient theory".[57] In another essay, Huxley quotes from *Fantasia of the Unconscious* (1922), in which Lawrence describes the moon as a "globe of dynamic substance, like radium or phosphorus, coagulated upon a vivid pole of energy".[58] The problem with this statement, writes Huxley, "is that it happens to be demonstrably untrue".[59] Furthermore, in his memoirs Julian Huxley recalls a winter holiday with Aldous, his wife Maria and the Lawrences at Les Diablerets in Switzerland, during the course

51 Huxley, *Point Counter Point*, 325.
52 Ibid.
53 See Bradshaw, "Best of Companions" (August 1996), 365–366.
54 J.W.N. Sullivan, *Beethoven: His Spiritual Development* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1936), 239, 243.
55 Huxley, *Point Counter Point*, 441.
56 See Bradshaw, "Best of Companions" (August 1996), 367.
57 Aldous Huxley, "D.H. Lawrence", in *CE* 4: 76.
58 Aldous Huxley, "Meditation on the Moon", in *CE* 3: 111.
59 Ibid.

of which Julian and Aldous discussed eugenics and evolution, occasioning a "snort of impotent rage" from Lawrence.[60] This is confirmed by Aldous Huxley, who affirms that Lawrence "always passionately disbelieved" in evolutionary theory.[61] In much the same manner, Philip Quarles raises scientific objections to Rampion's primitivism: for instance, when Rampion advocates reverting to a pre-industrial mode of life, Quarles argues that since industrialism facilitated the "doubling of the world's population in a hundred years", getting rid of the machine would necessitate killing off half the existing population.[62]

Moreover, there are significant differences between Lawrence's animism, Rampion's philosophy of harmonious living in *Point Counter Point*, and the life-worship philosophy Huxley expounds in *Do What You Will*. It is worth parsing some of these differences here since they illustrate Huxley's pragmatic attitude to spirituality at this time. Rampion's model for balanced, harmonious living is Etruscan civilisation. In his travel book, *Sketches of Etruscan Places* (1932),[63] Lawrence asserts:

> To the Etruscan all was alive; the whole universe lived; and the business of man was himself to live amid it all. He had to draw life into himself, out of the wandering huge vitalities of the world [...]. The whole thing was alive, and had a great soul, or *anima*: and in spite of one great soul, there were myriad roving, lesser souls: every man, every creature and tree and lake and mountain and stream, was animate, had its own peculiar consciousness. And has it to-day.[64]

In *Point Counter Point*, however, Rampion praises the Etruscans for their mind-body balance, rather than their animistic affirmation of life.[65] And Rampion's notion of God is devoid of Rank's *mysterium tremendum et fascinans* and seems instead like an intellectual abstraction, an ideal entity of the type Rampion habitually maligns: "God's the total result, spiritual and physical, of any thought or action that makes for life, of any vital relation with the world. God's a quality of actions and relations – a felt, experienced quality. At any rate, he's

60 Julian Huxley, *Memories*, 1: 153.

61 Huxley, "D.H. Lawrence", in *CE* 4: 76.

62 Huxley, *Point Counter Point*, 308.

63 While it was published posthumously in 1932, the essays contained in it appeared in *Travel and World Today* between November 1927 and May 1928.

64 D.H. Lawrence, *Sketches of Etruscan Places and Other Italian Essays*, ed. Simonetta de Filippis (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 56–57.

65 See Huxley, *Point Counter Point*, 110.

that for *our* purposes, for purposes of living".[66] If Lawrence "worshipped" life, it was because he regarded it as a metaphysical force, whereas Huxley, at this time, was a humanist, who regarded "god" as a Feuerbachian projection of fugitive psychological states. In "One and Many", he contends that the Greeks conceived of a polytheistic universe because they regarded themselves as diverse, at once warlike (Ares) and loving (Eros), beautiful (Aphrodite) and wise (Athena), whereas the Christians exalted the soul at the expense of the body and therefore worshipped a monotheistic God. "Monotheism and polytheism are doctrines", writes Huxley,

> equally necessary and equally true. Man can and does conceive of himself and of the world as being, now essentially many, and now essentially one. Therefore – since God, for our human purposes, is simply Life in so far as man can conceive it as a whole – the Divine is both one and many.[67]

Moreover, in "Varieties of Intelligence", Huxley notes that as a materialist it makes perfect sense for him to "explain" religion in terms of psychology and physiology,[68] whereas this procedure would have been anathema to Lawrence.

Huxley's position above, that humans experience themselves as both one and many, constituted one of the chief tenets of his philosophy of life worship, which he expounds in the essay "Pascal", whom he dubs a "death-worshipper" in light of Pascal's preoccupation with salvation and the afterlife. The life-worshipper denies the existence of a single unified self, but rather believes in a diversity of selves; given this ontological inconsistency, it is inexpedient to adhere to moral absolutes, since what is absolutely true for self *x* in the morning may prove absolutely false for self *y* in the afternoon. Rather than renouncing, like Pascal, all but the religious self, the life-worshipper holds that each one of his several selves has the right to exist. "The life-worshipper's aim", writes Huxley, "is to achieve a vital equilibrium, not by drawing in his diversities, not by moderating his exuberances [...] but by giving them rein one against another. His is the equilibrium of balanced excesses".[69] He therefore "aspires", Huxley continues, "to balance excess of self-consciousness and intelligence by excess of intuition, of instinctive and visceral living; to remedy the ill effects of too much contemplation by those of too much action, too much solitude by too

66 Ibid., 433.
67 Huxley, "One and Many", in *CE* 2: 317–318.
68 See Huxley, "Varieties of Intelligence", in ibid., 172.
69 Aldous Huxley, "Pascal", in ibid., 392.

much sociability, too much enjoyment by too much asceticism".[70] For Pierre Vitoux, life-worship was devoid of principles or values and represented a "moving away from the Laurentian doctrine [...] to a form of dilettantism which could only be abhorrent to his friend".[71]

The other key inspiration for Huxley's life-worship was William Blake. As with Huxley's appropriation of Lawrence's ideas, snippets of Blake's religious philosophy are used to shore up Huxley's secular humanism. In "Pascal", Huxley adduces Blake as an example of a successful life-worshipper (alongside Mozart, Robert Burns, Shakespeare, Tolstoy, Rubens, Chaucer and Montaigne).[72] *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, Huxley states, is "the best statement" of the "life-worshipper's metaphysic":

> Without contraries is no progression. Attraction and Repulsion, Reason and Energy, Love and Hate are necessary to Man's Existence.
> [...]
> Man has no Body distinct from his Soul; for that call'd body is a portion of the Soul discern'd by the Senses, the chief inlets of spirit in this age. Energy is the only life and is from the body. ... Energy is Eternal Delight.
> [...]
> God alone Acts or is in existing beings or Men.[73]

In the text, these three quotations are run together without ellipses, whereas they appear under different rubrics in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*.[74] The first quote, Christopher Bode notes, is from "The Argument", while the second is from "The Voice of the Devil": "Does that make it 'bad'? It is the same devil who says: 'Those who restrain desire, do so because theirs is weak enough / to be restrained'" etc. "so, can 'he' be trusted at all?"[75] Several scholars, however, concur that Blake is casting himself in the role of the devil because he

70 Ibid., 393.

71 Pierre Vitoux, "Aldous Huxley and D.H. Lawrence: An Attempt at Intellectual Sympathy", *The Modern Language Review* 69, no. 3 (1974): 519.

72 See Huxley, "Pascal", in *CE* 2: 394.

73 Ibid., 391.

74 Incidentally, the third quote is a slight misquotation; the original reads: "God *only* acts *and* is in existing beings or men" (my italics), from *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* in *William Blake: Selected Poetry*, ed. Michael Mason (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 81.

75 Christopher Bode, "Huxley and Blake: The Meeting of the Parallels", in *The Perennial Satirist: Essays in Honour of Bernfried Nugel*, ed. Peter E. Firchow and Hermann J. Real (Münster: LIT Verlag, 2005), 138.

heretically opposed orthodox Christianity.[76] Blake's title is a rebuttal of *Heaven and Hell* by Emanuel Swedenborg, who cleaved to Cartesian dualism, whereas Blake is advocating a marriage of heaven (reason/mind/soul) and hell (body/energy), or rather maintaining that the two are actually one: "Man has no Body distinct from his Soul; for that call'd body is a portion of the Soul discern'd by the Senses, the chief inlets of spirit in this age".

Blake's position is quite different from life-worship, which acknowledges the division between mind and body, and advocates striking a balance between the two. "However strong and invigorating", writes Vitoux, "Huxley may find the Proverbs turned loose from Hell against conventional moralities and pieties, the difficulty is that his eclectic pluralism has its roots in another soil than Blake's mystic monism".[77] Bode opines that Blake would have bridled at Huxley's jaunty humanism in *Do What You Will*: Blake "never doubted", Bode asserts, "the ulterior reality of his visions or the truth of his beliefs. 'If all men were alike', says Huxley, 'all the world would worship the same God'. But for Blake, God was certainly not just a function of the human mind or personality; not for him Huxley's liberal advocacy of religious plurality, the religious supermarket that leaves everything to customer choice".[78] Furthermore, in *Texts and Pretexts* (1932), Huxley presents Blake as a prophet of ethical freedom in light of the following lines from *Jerusalem*:

> Descend, O Lamb of God, & take away the imputation of Sin
> By the Creation of States & the deliverance of individuals evermore. Amen.
> Thus wept they in Beulah over the Four Regions of Albion:
> But many doubted & despaired & imputed Sin & Righteousness,
> To Individuals & not to States, and these Slept in Ulro.[79]

According to Huxley, Blake's "doctrine of states" absolves the average man of moral responsibility for his actions, since this can only be attached to states

76 See for example Northrop Frye's *Fearful Symmetry* (1947); *The "Heaven" and "Hell" of William Blake* (1973) by G.R. Sabri-Tabrizi; and *Witness Against the Beast* (1993) by E.P. Thompson.

77 Pierre Vitoux, "Aldous Huxley on D.H. Lawrence's Philosophy of Life", in *Now More Than Ever: Proceedings of the Aldous Huxley Centenary Symposium*, ed. Bernfried Nugel (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1995), 308.

78 Bode, "Huxley and Blake", 127.

79 Aldous Huxley, *Texts and Pretexts: An Anthology with Commentaries* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1949), 43.

"and not to the person (if such a being any longer exists) who passes through the states".[80] Again, Bode protests that Huxley ingenuously conflates Blake with the speaker from *Jerusalem*.[81] Whether or not Blake would have endorsed the doctrine of states, he seems to be the source for the life-worshipper's insistence that the fixed ego is a myth and that the individual is nothing more than a discontinuous succession of psychological states.[82] Despite Huxley's enthusiastic presentation of life worship, there's little evidence to suggest that he attempted to put it into practice in his life. Like Quarles, Huxley was a barbarian of the intellect, who was unable to counter-balance his mental excesses with intuitive and visceral living. Moreover, life worship was in many ways impracticable, for it simply is not possible to be, say, both "excessively passionate and excessively chaste", since excessive chastity is incompatible with any kind of sexual activity, much less the excess of passion Huxley prescribes.[83]

H.G. Wells (1866–1946), the World State and *Brave New World*

What makes Huxley's work distinctively modern at this time, Jay Clayton maintains, was not his adoption of the new physics, but the influence of the modern synthesis in biology of evolutionary theory with the emerging science of genetics. This was being propounded by Huxley's friend J.B.S. Haldane and his brother Julian, both of whom approved of Wells' utopias, mapped out in books such as *A Modern Utopia* (1905), *Men Like Gods* (1923) and *The World of William Clissold* (1926), in which an elite corps of scientists and philosophers ruled over a World State. Wells' vision, Clayton argues, "is a convenient marker of the way in which many influential scientists, including all those in Aldous Huxley's immediate circle – Haldane, Julian Huxley, and [Bertrand] Russell – saw themselves as 'modern'".[84] What these men shared was a "demystified

80 Ibid., 44.

81 Bode, "Huxley and Blake", 129.

82 The other influence is Lawrence, who, Huxley argues in his essay "D.H. Lawrence", presents his characters as the "locus of polytheism". Huxley quotes from the oft-cited letter from Lawrence to Edward Garnett in 1914, in which he declares: "You mustn't look in my novel for the old stable *ego* of the character. There is another *ego,* according to whose action the individual is unrecognizable, and passes through, as it were, allotropic states which it needs a deeper sense than any we've been used to exercise, to discover are states of the same single radically unchanged element". However, this seems to imply that underlying the allotropic states (e.g. diamond, coal, soot) there is an "unchanged element" (carbon) that is analogous to character. See Huxley, "D.H. Lawrence", in *CE* 4: 78–81.

83 Huxley, "Pascal", in *CE* 2: 293.

84 Clayton, "The Modern Synthesis", 881.

vision of reality", a belief in the instrumental role of science, and an adherence to scientific impartiality that, in the words of Haldane, "places all phenomena on the same emotional level".[85] According to Clayton, the emotional impartiality of Huxley's satire is characteristic of the scientific conception of modernity and sets him apart from literary modernists such as Lawrence and Joyce.[86] While there are notable differences between Huxley and his modernist peers, it should be pointed out that T.S. Eliot, in "Tradition and the Individual Talent" (1919), presented scientific detachment or "impersonality" as the keynote of his poetic practice. Clayton presents the "emotional impersonality" of Philip Quarles as a positive virtue, despite quoting Elinor Quarles, who believes that her husband's alienation from the world of emotions and intuitions prevents him from being a great novelist.[87] It is Quarles' emotional impartiality that allows him to examine the world from a "multiplicity of perspectives".[88] For Clayton, Quarles embodies the "modern scientific self", which "can see all sides objectively and eviscerate them all with emotional impartiality".[89] However, the scientific perspective is but *one* of the several different perspectives Huxley presents in the novel, as should be clear from the excerpt Clayton quotes: the "essence of the new way of looking is multiplicity", says Quarles. "Multiplicity of eyes and multiplicity of aspects seen. … [T]here's the biologist, the chemist, the physicist, the historian. Each sees, professionally, a different aspect of the event, a different layer of reality. What I want to do is to look with all those eyes at once. With religious eyes, scientific eyes, economic eyes, *homme moyen sensual* eyes".[90] Moreover, in a letter from January 1930, Huxley lambastes scientists for imagining that they deal with "the whole truth and nothing but the truth", when in fact they consider a single aspect of the phenomenal world and ignore the "series of orders or categories" that lie outside their purview. For instance, Huxley notes that electrons and quanta make "no sense in the category inhabited by the painter of pictures", and describes his essay "One and Many" as a "statement of the observable facts of diversity so stupidly overlooked by contemporary science".[91]

A more plausible explanation for Huxley's embrace of multiplicity at this time, and the emotional impartiality of his satire, is his adoption of Pyrrhonian scepticism. At the end of the 1920s, Robert Baker notes, Huxley was "fond of

85 Ibid.
86 See ibid., 881–882.
87 See ibid., 885.
88 Ibid., 886.
89 Ibid., 887.
90 Ibid.
91 Smith, *Letters*, 325.

referring to himself as a Pyrrhonist, that is, a thinker who mistrusted all philosophical systems founded on notions of essential truth".[92] If at this time Huxley was presenting the world from a multiplicity of viewpoints, it was because he was sceptical of all of them, or at any rate, disbelieved that any one perspective was a conduit to objective truth or noumenal reality. But while Clayton acknowledges that Huxley described himself at this time as a "Pyrrhonic aesthete", he imagines that Huxley was referring to Pyrrhus of Epirus, whose victory over the Romans at the battle of Asculum in 279 BCE was achieved in the face of devastating loss (hence the phrase Pyrrhic victory), rather than the ancient Greek philosopher Pyrrho who was renowned for his extreme scepticism.[93] In his essay on Pascal, Huxley approvingly notes the latter's use of Montaigne's Pyrrhonism to defeat the rationalists' pretensions to obtain knowledge of "any absolute whatever".[94] A hundred years after Pascal, the rationalists "were slaughtered again by Kant, and, after the passage of another century, yet once more, and this time with a Tamburlane-like ferocity and thoroughness, by Nietzsche".[95] Not only is Nietzsche part of the tradition of philosophers above who attack the notion of metaphysical truth, his perspectivism may have been an inspiration for Huxley's emphasis on a multiplicity of perspectives. "Perspectival seeing is the *only* kind of seeing there is", writes Nietzsche, "perspectival 'knowing' the *only* kind of 'knowing'; and the *more* feelings about a matter which we allow to come to expression, the *more* eyes, different eyes through which we are able to view this same matter, the more complete our 'conception' of it, our 'objectivity', will be".[96]

Brave New World has often been read as a cautionary tale of science run amok, especially since the development of IVF treatment in the 1970s.[97] Admittedly, Huxley was concerned with the dangers of untrammelled scientific research, but the novel can more precisely be read as an attack on mechanism. The revolt against mechanism was given voice by Thomas Carlyle in 1829, who

92 Robert S. Baker, introduction to *CE* 1: xix.

93 Clayton, "The Modern Synthesis", 892. There are some other startling errors in Clayton's article, such as his contention that the fascist Everard Webley was based on Oswald Mosley. Clayton also states that Lawrence was worried that Maria Huxley "might have been hurt by the death of a fictional child modeled on their own son's death" in *Point Counter Point,* when their only son Matthew Huxley died in 2005, whereas the death of little Phil was debatably inspired by the death of Naomi Mitchison's child from meningitis.

94 Huxley, "Pascal", in *CE* 2: 375.

95 Ibid.

96 Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, trans. Douglas Smith (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 98.

97 See Joanne Woiak, "Designing a Brave New World: Eugenics, Politics and Fiction", *The Public Historian* 29, no. 3 (2007): 112.

dubbed his age the "Age of Machinery" and bemoaned the decline of religion, art and morality.[98] For Matthew Arnold, as noted in the introduction to this chapter, mechanism was construed in opposition to culture. As for Huxley, he regarded mechanism as the scourge of not only culture but individualism. In *Brave New World*, Huxley's attack on mechanism takes three forms: the industrial techniques of mass production and rationalisation employed by Henry Ford; the mechanisation of popular culture; and the behaviourist psychology of Neo-Pavlovian conditioning that treats humans as machines.

Huxley discovered Ford's memoir, *My Life and Work* (1922), on board a ship bound for America and was horrified by his approach to rationalisation: "We measure on each job the exact amount of room that a man needs", writes Ford. "This brings our machines closer together than in probably any other factory in the world. To a stranger they may seem piled up on top of one another, but they are scientifically arranged, not only in the sequence of operations, but to give every man and every machine every square inch that he requires and, if possible, not a square inch, and certainly not a square foot, more than he requires".[99] As James Sexton points out, Huxley parodies Ford's style of rationalisation in his helicopter lighting-sets factory in *Brave New World*, wherein the humans are specifically manufactured to fit the machines, rather than the other way round.[100] Furthermore, Huxley takes the principle of mass production and applies it to human reproduction:

> In the Bottling Room all was harmonious bustle and ordered activity. Flaps of fresh sow's peritoneum ready cut to the proper size came shooting up in little lifts from the Organ Store in the sub-basement. Whizz and then, click! the lift-hatches flew open; the Bottle-Liner had only to reach out a hand, take the flap, smooth-down, and before the lined bottle had had time to travel out of reach along the endless band, whizz, click! another flap of peritoneum had shot up from the depths, ready to be slipped into yet another bottle, the next of that slow interminable procession on the band.[101]

98 See Thomas Carlyle, "Sign of the Times", in *Modern British Essayists: Thomas Carlyle* (Philadelphia: A. Hart, 1852), 187–195.

99 Henry Ford, quoted in James Sexton, "*Brave New World* and the Rationalization of Industry", in *Critical Essays on Aldous Huxley*, ed. Jerome Meckier (New York: G.K. Hall, 1996), 90. For Huxley's reaction to *My Life and Work*, see Aldous Huxley, "Malaya", in *CE* 2: 525–526.

100 Sexton, "*Brave New World*", 90.

101 Huxley, *Brave New World*, 6–7.

And just as material goods were standardised so that, for example, each Model T Ford was exactly alike, so the lower castes of the World State are produced in identical batches via Bokanovsky's Process.

Huxley had long been indignant that not only did working men and women have to suffer mechanisation at work, their leisure time had been mechanised too. In the past, the working class had actively to amuse themselves by playing musical instruments, telling stories, staging amateur dramatics and so on, whereas now these amusements had become mechanised and commodified and were passively consumed in the form of gramophone records, radio, pulp fiction and films.[102] Huxley may well have been alluding to Carlyle in his essay "The Outlook for American Culture: Some Reflections in a Machine Age" (1927), when he noted the deleterious effects of industrial techniques, such as standardisation and mass production, on the quality of popular culture, resulting in the dissemination of "ideas and art of lowest quality" in order to appeal to the greatest number of consumers.[103] In "Reading, the New Vice" (1930), Huxley takes a strong Arnoldian line: "Culture is not derived from the reading of *books* – but from thorough and intensive reading of *good* books".[104] He regards the consumption of newspapers, magazines and popular fiction as the new "universal opiate" and proposes a paper tax of 5000 percent in order to raise the standard of culture and "make the masses take an interest in the best that has been thought or said".[105] In the World State, Huxley takes the mechanisation of popular culture to its *reductio ad absurdum*, resulting in the feelies, the scent organ and sexophones on the one hand, and Electro-magnetic golf, Centrifugal Bumble-puppy and Escalator-Squash on the other.

Huxley rejected behaviourism on two counts. First, it privileged nurture over nature, and regarded babies as blank templates, devoid of individuality, which could be conditioned to occupy any role in life, such as doctor, lawyer, dentist, etc., whereas Huxley at this time was greatly interested in eugenics, which emphasised the role of heredity.[106] Second, behaviourism was reductive, conceiving of human beings as bodies that responded mechanically to environmental stimuli, while ignoring, or even denying, the existence and agency of mind. Furthermore, in "Science and Civilization" (1932), Huxley warns that

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102 See Aldous Huxley, "Pleasures", in *CE* 1: 356; idem, "One and Many", in *CE* 2: 318; idem, "The Outlook for American Culture: Some Reflections in a Machine Age", in *CE* 3: 189; idem, "The Victory of Art over Humanity", in *CE* 3: 283.

103 Huxley, "The Outlook for American Culture", in *CE* 3: 190.

104 Aldous Huxley, "Reading, the New Vice", in ibid., 48.

105 Ibid., 48–49.

106 See Aldous Huxley, "The Idea of Equality", in *CE* 2: 157–158 and Firchow, "Science and Conscience", 310–311.

behaviourism could easily be used for government propaganda: "One of these days some apparently beneficent and humanitarian government will create a comprehensive system of state *crèches* and baby farms; and – with a little systematic conditioning of infant reflexes – it will have the fate of its future subjects in its hands".[107] In *Brave New World*, the scene in which babies are conditioned to abhor books and flowers by dint of electric shocks closely resembles one of J.B. Watson's behaviourist experiments.[108] The lower castes of the World State, then, are genetically mass produced through Bokanovsky's Process, standardised through Neo-Pavlovian nurture, and whatever individuality that might emerge is quashed through hypnopaedia.

Some critics have read *Brave New World* as a significant break with Lawrence,[109] but it vigorously continues his crusade against mechanism, which Huxley had treated in *Point Counter Point.* In that novel, Rampion rails at Henry Ford and Alfred Mond as exponents of Taylorism, mass production and standardisation, which had mechanised both work and leisure, promoting a purely mental mode of being that ignores the body and which will eventually result, he predicts, in revolution.[110] Lawrence can be seen in the romantic lineage of Carlyle. As Michael Whitworth points out, for Carlyle "machinery" stood "not only for the visible machines of the industrial revolution, but for all intellectual processes of analysis or mental 'dissection'".[111] Lawrence's great enemy was idealism, by which he meant the philosophical priority of mind over body, God over man, word over flesh. He attributed the intellectual sway of idealism in the preceding three millennia to Plato, Buddha and Christ, who rejected life (the phenomenal world, samsara and earth respectively) and valorised an ideal afterlife (the world of forms, nirvana, heaven).[112] Lawrence's influence is clearly visible in Huxley's essay "To the Puritan All Things Are Impure" (1931):

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107 See Aldous Huxley, "Science and Civilization", in *CE* 3: 151–152.

108 See Firchow, "Science and Conscience", 311.

109 See Jerome Meckier, "On D.H. Lawrence and Death, Especially Matricide: *Sons and Lovers, Brave New World*, and Aldous Huxley's Later Novels", *Aldous Huxley Annual* 7 (2007): 191–196 and William York Tindall, *Forces in Modern British Literature 1885–1946* (New York: Knopf, 1949). For a detailed rebuttal of this position, see my article "The Philosophy of Life-Worship: D.H. Lawrence and Aldous Huxley", *D.H. Lawrence Review* 34–35 (2010): 84–85.

110 See Huxley, *Point Counter Point*, 308.

111 Michael Whitworth, *Einstein's Wake: Relativity, Metaphor, and Modern Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 112.

112 See D.H. Lawrence, "A Propos of *'Lady Chatterley's Lover'*", in *Lady Chatterley's Lover,* ed. Michael Squires (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 330.

> From the time of Plato onwards there has been a tendency to exalt the thinking, spiritual man at the expense of the animal. Christianity confirmed Platonism; and now, in its turn, what I may call Fordism, or the philosophy of industrialism, confirms, though with important modifications, the spiritualizing doctrines of Christianity. Fordism demands that we should sacrifice the animal man (and along with the animal large portions of the thinking, spiritual man) not indeed to God, but to the Machine. There is no place in the factory, or in that larger factory which is the modern industrialized world, for animals on the one hand, or for artists, mystics, or even, finally, individuals on the other. [...] Rigorously practised for a few generations, this dreadful religion of the machine will end by destroying the human race.[113]

Huxley's attack on mechanism, then, would seem to ally him with the literary modernists, rather than, as Clayton contends, scientific modernists like Wells and Haldane.[114] Adam Roberts argues that where the authors of pulp and science fiction tended to celebrate or even fetishise technology, regarding the machine as a marvellous device to facilitate time and space travel, and to construct utopian castles in the air, the high modernists were by and large resistant to technological change.[115] As a result, the work of H.G. Wells was regarded as the antithesis of the modernist aesthetic, and was marginalised by academics.[116] Roberts notes that the modernist, or at least literary, writers who ventured to write science fiction at this time tended to produce dystopias in which machines exerted a dehumanising effect.[117] For Valentine Cunningham, *Brave New World* is "the key dystopian fiction" of the 1930s and encapsulates the "widespread Western disquiet over the triumph of machine-age materialism".[118] One of Huxley's stated aims, in writing the book, was to satirise Wells' technological utopias,[119] and in his letters he disparages both Wells' personality (judging him "a rather horrid, vulgar little man") and his work (which he finds unreadable, written in a "dreadful swill-tub style").[120]

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113 Aldous Huxley, "To the Puritan All Things Are Impure", in *CE* 3: 238–239.

114 See Clayton, "The Modern Synthesis", 882.

115 See Adam Roberts, *The History of Science Fiction*, 2nd ed. (London: Macmillan, 2016), 229–230.

116 See ibid. 232 and Roger Luckhurst, *Science Fiction* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2005), 46.

117 E.g. *We* (1920) by Yevgeny Zamyatin and "The Machine Stops" (1909) by E.M. Forster. See Roberts, *History of Science Fiction*, 233.

118 Cunningham quoted in ibid., 232.

119 See Smith, *Letters*, 348.

120 Ibid., 281.

However, while Huxley shared the modernists' horror of mechanism, he did not subscribe to their aesthetic concerns with interiority, parataxis and formal experimentation. As a novelist of ideas, Huxley had rather more in common with Wells than Joyce or Lawrence. Indeed, Bradshaw argues that Huxley was highly influenced by Wells in the years just before and after *Brave New World* was published, and that he enthusiastically endorsed Wells' Open Conspiracy scheme, in which a technocratic elite of scientists and industrialists would somehow (Wells is a little fuzzy on the details) usurp the old-fashioned nationalist governments of the world and create a rational, scientific world state.[121] This idea had surfaced first in several books by Wells, such as the world states envisaged in *Anticipations* (1902), *A Modern Utopia* and the Open Conspiracy in *The World of William Clissold*. Wells then wrote a treatise entitled *The Open Conspiracy: Blue Prints for a World Revolution* (1928), in which he set forth his grandiose scheme of scientific salvation. Huxley is clearly responding to this book in his essay "The New Salvation" (1929), in which he likens Wells to General Booth (the founder of the Salvation Army), and opines: "In theory I am all for man living scientifically, creating his own destiny and so forth. But in practice I doubt whether he can. I doubt whether any great scheme of human regeneration, of large-scale social Salvationism, can be carried through".[122] One of the problems, Huxley notes, is that humans cannot foresee all the effects of their reforms: for instance, machines, while saving time and labour, have decreased creativity and sapped the spirit of the workers. The machine, far from endowing humans with "supermanhood" has instead rendered them "submen".[123]

While Bradshaw acknowledges Huxley's critique of Wells in "The New Salvation", he argues that the economic crisis of 1931 led Huxley to call for a Wellsian "global government" and in support of this contention adduces Huxley's essay "The Victory of Art over Humanity" (1931), in which Huxley calls for "a world-wide adjustment of production to consumption [...] a world policy for gold, for fuel, for agriculture", in other words international co-operation to solve the economic problems of the slump, but this is not the same as the establishment of a Wellsian world state.[124] In the next sentence of the same essay, Huxley writes, indicating what he has in mind: "International agreement on any important issue is hard to reach".[125] Furthermore, it would be absurd to expect the

121 David Bradshaw, "Open Conspirators: Huxley and H.G. Wells 1927–35", in *The Hidden Huxley: Contempt and Compassion for the Masses 1920–36* (London: Faber, 1994), 31–46.

122 Aldous Huxley, "The New Salvation", in *CE* 3: 212.

123 Ibid.

124 See Bradshaw, "Open Conspirators", 37.

125 Huxley, "Victory of Art", in *CE* 3: 285.

Open Conspiracy to ameliorate the slump when it would take decades for this kind of peaceable global revolution to get off the ground. Warren Wagar writes that at first the "Open Conspirators would be concerned almost entirely with a definition of their aims, the vague beginnings of organization, the explanation and propaganda of the world-state idea in all its complexity, and the establishment of the close contact among educational reformers attempting to modernize education […]. Wells expected this first stage to last for many years".[126]

Bradshaw also quotes from "Science and Civilization", an essay in which Huxley warns that if science is exploited by economists, as opposed to humanists, it will be a menace to society, for whereas a humanist will use science to realise "the highest human aspirations", the "aim of the economist will be to make the world safe for political economy – to train up a race, not of perfect human beings, but of perfect mass-producers and mass-consumers", and this is precisely what occurs in *Brave New World*.[127] While a humanist would use positive eugenics to boost intelligence and creativity, an economist would use science for dysgenic ends, to lower intelligence because this is more desirable for menial jobs and produces greater social stability.[128] It is while pondering the latter course that Huxley, doubtless thinking of *Brave New World*, writes:

> this would have to be accompanied by the special breeding and training of a small caste of experts, without whom a scientific civilization cannot exist. Here, incidentally, I may remark that in a scientific civilization society must be organized on a caste basis. The rulers and their advisory experts will be a kind of Brahmins controlling, in virtue of a special and mysterious knowledge, vast hordes of the intellectual equivalents of Sudras and Untouchables.[129]

But Bradshaw quotes this as if these were Huxley's *recommendations*, rather than Huxley envisaging the kind of society that would be produced by the scientific manipulation of humankind for economic ends, and it is this scenario that Huxley satirises in *Brave New World*. The lower castes of the World State are genetically engineered, behaviourally conditioned and narcotically nurtured to enjoy their narrow lives of unquestioning consumption and production, and are thus made to serve economic ends. Moreover, the Open Conspiracy, whose

126 W. Warren Wagar, *H.G. Wells and the World State* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1961), 188.

127 Huxley, "Science and Civilization", in *CE* 3: 150.

128 See ibid., 153–154.

129 Ibid., 154.

purpose was the "establishment of an economic world system", and whose ruling elite would be composed of "many industrial and financial leaders and directors", resembles the economic-scientific utopia Huxley was critiquing in "Science and Civilization" and *Brave New World*.[130]

Bradshaw presents the Federation for Progressive Societies and Individuals (FPSI) as if it were an offshoot or organ of the Open Conspiracy, noting that it advocated scientific planning and a world state, and that both Huxley and Wells were vice presidents.[131] He then undermines his argument by pointing out that neither Wells nor Huxley took the FPSI seriously, with the former "los[ing] interest almost immediately"[132] while the latter "gave a nude reading of Blake and *The Waste Land*" while attending a weekend conference of the FPSI's Education Group.[133] The FPSI began as a splinter group from the Rationalist Press Association (RPA), which was formed in 1899 to publish the work of scientists and freethinkers that endorsed a secularist worldview.[134] Some of its members, such as J.B. Coates and the philosopher C.E.M. Joad, felt that the RPA was out of date and should embrace the "scientific humanism" of H.G. Wells and Julian Huxley (who had co-authored, along with Wells' son, *The Science of Life* in 1929).[135] The resulting "basis" of the FPSI was very much in line with Wells' Open Conspiracy, calling for, among other things, the "setting up of a world government", the "establishment of a world banking organization and a world economy", the "scientific development of the actual and potential resources of the world".[136] This comes as no surprise since Wells only consented to be vice president of the FPSI on the condition that he be allowed to redraft the basis in conformity with the Open Conspiracy, which was only reluctantly accepted by Coates and Joad.[137] According to Bill Cooke, the "clearest enunciation" of the FPSI's charter can be found in Joad's 1932 autobiography, which conspicuously lacks any reference to a world state or government and is instead devoted to the repeal of divorce laws and laws discriminating against homosexuality, the legalisation of

130 H.G. Wells, *What Are We to Do with Our Lives?* (Windmill Press: Kingswood, 1931), 112, 43. This book is a revised version of *The Open Conspiracy.*

131 See Bradshaw, "Open Conspirators", 38–39.

132 Bradshaw is quoting from Wagar's *H.G. Wells and the World State* (cited above).

133 Bradshaw, "Open Conspirators", 39.

134 See Bill Cooke, *The Blasphemy Depot: A Hundred Years of the Rationalist Press Association* (Oldham: Rationalist Press Association, 2003), 27–28.

135 See ibid., 99–100.

136 "The Basis of the Federation of Progressive Societies and Individuals", in *Manifesto: Being the Book of the Federation for Progressive Societies and Individuals* (1934), ed. C.E.M. Joad (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1934), 23.

137 See Philip Coupland, "H.G. Wells's 'Liberal Fascism'", *Journal of Contemporary History* 35, no. 4 (2000): 546.

abortion, the disestablishment of the Church of England, provision of information on birth control, and the "sterilisation of the feeble-minded", all of which appear in the basis of the FPSI after Wells' ballyhoo about the world state. The emphasis on sexual freedom led some critics to joke that the FPSI stood for the Federation to Promote Sexual Intercourse.[138] Indeed, the close association between the FPSI and the Gymnic Association of Great Britain,[139] which advocated nudism, makes Huxley's nude poetry reading at the FPSI conference a little less baffling. It also explains Wells' disenchantment with the FPSI, which on the face of it seemed to support the Open Conspiracy; furthermore, Philip Coupland opines that Wells modelled the New World Society in his novel *Holy Terror* (1939) on the FPSI, describing them as "barely cryptic nudists" and "extremely woolly vegetarians".[140] If Huxley was, as Bradshaw suggests, an enthusiastic advocate of the Open Conspiracy, why did he not join the H.G. Wells Society (later renamed The Open Conspiracy and Cosmopolis) when it was established in 1934,[141] like his friend and mentor Gerald Heard?

In "Huxley's Slump", Bradshaw argues that *Brave New World*, although originally conceived as a spoof on Wells' novel *Men Like Gods*, ended up endorsing scientific planning, with Mustapha Mond "acting as Huxley's ideological spokesman".[142] He discusses Donald Watt's article, "The Manuscript Revisions of *Brave New World*", in which Watt reveals that Huxley originally conceived of Bernard Marx, and then the "Savage", as the novel's hero, but ultimately decided that only Helmholtz Watson would be positively portrayed.[143] But just because Huxley decided against making John the hero, which would have valorised the primitivism of the "Savage Reservation", this does not mean that he was suggesting that the scientific planning of the World State was superior. Indeed, Watt notes that the revisions "contribute much to the ironical perspective Huxley uses implicitly to deplore the values celebrated by his brave new world. One wonders, in view of the care Huxley took internally to express his dismay with Fordian London, how so many of his book's early reviewers could have thought

138 See Cooke, *The Blasphemy Depot*, 104.

139 See R.S. Koppen, *Virginia Woolf, Fashion and Literary Modernity* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), 122.

140 Coupland, "H.G. Wells's 'Liberal Fascism'", 546.

141 See Wagar, *H.G. Wells and the World State*, 198.

142 David Bradshaw, "Huxley's Slump: Planning, Eugenics, and the 'Ultimate Need' of Stability", in *The Art of Literary Biography*, ed. John Batchelor (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 161.

143 Donald Watt, "The Manuscript Revisions of *Brave New World*", in *Critical Essays on Aldous Huxley*, 79–80.

he was advocating its view of the future".[144] According to Bradshaw, though, Mond dominates the "Savage" in their interview and possesses the "most persuasive voice" in the novel, implying that Huxley was endorsing the Wellsian technocracy of the World State. But it seems to me that the "amused, Pyrrhonic aesthete" who wrote *Brave New World* was as sceptical of the "insanity" of the World State as he was of the "lunacy" of the "Savage Reservation".[145] In "On the Charms of History and the Future of the Past" (1931), Huxley asserts that both the future and the past function as wish-fulfilling utopias that compensate for the desiderata of the present.[146] On the one hand, *Brave New World* can be read as a rebuttal of the retrospective primitive utopia Huxley associated with Lawrence, and on the other it rejects Wells' soulless utopia of the future.[147] Where Lawrence's disgust at the buttoned-up, over-cerebral existence of Western civilisation led him to romanticise the "barbarism" of Mexicans and Native Americans in *The Plumed Serpent* (1926) and *Mornings in Mexico* (1927), Wells' frustration at the democratic, nationalistic and above all unscientific nature of British society led him to imagine a global technocratic government. But Huxley was doubtless thinking about his own "utopia", when he wrote:

> Contemporary prophets have visions of future societies founded on the idea of natural inequality, not of natural equality; they look forward to the re-establishment, on a new and much more realistic foundation, of the old hierarchies; they have visions of a ruling aristocracy and of a race slowly improved, not by any improvement in the educational, legal, or physical environment [...] but by deliberate eugenic breeding.[148]

If, as Bradshaw maintains, *Brave New World* is broadly supportive of scientific planning, why did Wells feel betrayed by the book when he read it? Gerald Heard reports that "Wells wrote Huxley an angry letter about *Brave New World*, charging him with treason to science".[149] Moreover, as R.S. Deese argues, Wells caricatured Huxley in *The Shape of Things to Come* (1933) as the precious aesthete Ariston Theotocopulos, who rails against progress and space

144 Ibid., 79.
145 See Aldous Huxley, 1946 foreword to *Brave New World*, xxx.
146 See Aldous Huxley, "On the Charms of History and the Future of the Past", in *CE* 3: 132–135.
147 See Robert S. Baker, *Brave New World: History, Science, and Dystopia* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1990), 112.
148 Huxley, "On the Charms of History", in *CE* 3: 137.
149 Heard, "Poignant Prophet", 57.

exploration.[150] Wells' narrator even refers to Huxley as "one of the most brilliant of reactionary writers",[151] and the utopian world state forged by the Dictatorship of the Air, with its classless society of scientists and intellectuals, can be seen as a riposte to Huxley, whose position in *Brave New World* is that a society solely composed of superior individuals would rapidly implode. This is illustrated in the "Cyprus Experiment", in which the Controllers place twenty-two thousand Alphas on the island of Cyprus; in the absence of any low-caste workers to cultivate crops and work in the factories, a civil war breaks out over who will perform these demeaning jobs, resulting in the death of nineteen thousand Alphas.[152] As noted above, some critics have read *Brave New World* as a satirical attack on Lawrence's primitivism, but it is clear from a letter Huxley wrote to Mary Hutchinson shortly after the publication of the novel that Huxley's sympathies still lay with Lawrence (despite his hostility to science) rather than Wells. "That miserable little Wells talked of [Lawrence] with such vulgar disparagement", he writes, describing their meeting in Cannes:

> Wells, if he is a great man, is great in so far as he is a perfect specimen of the Canaille magnified ten thousand times: so bottomlessly vulgar and insensitive, without the smallest power of discrimination either in the moral or the aesthetic sphere: an *âme mal née* and therefore, in spite of his immense ability, profoundly uninteresting.[153]

On balance, then, it would seem that if Huxley was not quite, as Anthony Burgess opined, "the greatest anti-Wellsian of them all", neither was he the "Wellsian fellow-traveller" that Bradshaw suggests.[154]

As I suggested above, Huxley's attack on mechanism in *Brave New World* is very much of a piece with his philosophy of life worship. In an interview with

150 R.S. Deese, *We Are Amphibians: Julian and Aldous Huxley on the Future of Our Species* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2015), 167. Deese argues that Wells' attack on Huxley is even more evident in the film version, *Things to Come* (1936), directed by Alexander Korda, with a screenplay by Wells: "Wells vented his full anger at *Brave New World* when he penned the fate of Theotocopoulos [*sic*] and his followers: as they rush to the launch pad to stop the moon-shot, they are incinerated by the fire of progress – in this case the blast of a rocket engine – as the mission to the moon proceeds right on schedule".

151 H.G. Wells, *The Shape of Things to Come: The Ultimate Revolution* (London: Hutchinson, 1935), 279.

152 See Huxley, *Brave New World*, 196–197. See also Aldous Huxley, "A Note on Eugenics", in CE 2: 284, in which he specifically criticises Wells' utopias for imagining that genetically enhanced individuals would complaisantly submit to menial tasks.

153 Sexton, *Selected Letters*, 267.

154 See Bradshaw, "Open Conspirators", 37.

Sullivan, which was part of a series of interviews with scientists and thinkers that first appeared in the *Observer* in 1930–31, Huxley still seems to be a life worshipper, professing admiration for the "Greek ideal" of "balance and harmony" and conceiving of god as a Feuerbachian phantom: "My tendency is to believe that everything is purely human, and that nothing in our experience points beyond itself to some ultimate reality".[155] However, he observes that the "people are eager for some kind of religion", and gives as examples the "community singing in this country and the religious ceremonies in the Hollywood Bowl in America".[156] This newfound spiritual yearning seems to express an underlying malaise, for he predicts that the "next revolution" will be psychological rather than economic and will occur "because of the intolerable nature of the standardised lives we lead".[157] Consequently, in *Brave New World*, Huxley is careful to provide surrogates for spiritual experience, which are administered in the same instrumental manner as a Violent Passion Surrogate. In the appendix to *The Devils of Loudun* (1952), Huxley writes that humans have always felt the urge to transcend their personality, and that in the absence of "upward self-transcendence" through religion, they have readily embraced the path of "downward self-transcendence" through music, dance, sex and drugs.[158] Given that the Brave New Worlders worship Henry Ford, they must make do with Community Sings, orgiastic Solidarity Services and *soma*.

The Community Sings, as the quote above would indicate, were inspired by the "national craze" for community singing in England in the mid- to late 1920s. Community singing was the "performance of popular songs", such as hymns, sea shanties and music-hall numbers, which usually took place at other events, such as football matches, and which were interpreted by some as a "substitute for more formal religious activity".[159] These were led by a conductor or "community singing leader" dressed in a "distinctive and highly visible garb",[160] and, along with the Archbishop of Canterbury, doubtless contributed to Huxley's conception of the "Arch-Community Songster" of *Brave New World.* Dave Russell notes that the community-singing movement was perceived as providing social cohesion after the General Strike and Miners' Strike of 1926.[161]

155 J.W.N. Sullivan, *Contemporary Mind: Some Modern Answers* (London: Humphrey Toulmin, 1934), 146.

156 Ibid., 146–147.

157 Ibid., 147.

158 Aldous Huxley, *The Devils of Loudun* (London: Vintage, 2005), 361–375.

159 See Dave Russell, "Abiding Memories: The Community Singing Movement in English Social Life in the 1920s", *Popular Music* 27, no. 1 (2008): 118–119, 130.

160 Ibid., 118, 124.

161 See ibid., 125–126.

Huxley would surely have concurred with an article in *The Times* from August 1927, which presented community singing as "an extremely good thing in an age which encourages Everyman, by machinery and propaganda, to turn [radio] listener, that Everyman should insist on taking some part [...] in doing something".[162] On the other hand, Huxley would have regarded community singing as another sign of the death of the individual and the dumbing down of popular culture (only the most basic songs were included in the repertoire).

Jerome Meckier contends that *Brave New World* represents the mystical turn in Huxley's work. He argues that Helmholtz Watson is an incipient religious sage who has begun to "make contact with the timeless Vedantic truths".[163] In a footnote, Meckier notes that Huxley met Gerald Heard in 1929, the year in which Heard published *The Ascent of Humanity*, in which he maintains that more and more people, in Meckier's words, "will become sages and seers by utilizing their remaining evolutionary energy to do what isolated mystics have been able to accomplish and what the race as a whole may one day learn to do: broaden the mind, multiply its powers, achieve total awareness".[164] From here, Meckier goes on to assert that Helmholtz "develops into a true genius, a Huxley-Heard superman" who "senses within himself a surplus of internal energy, an 'extra power' that Heard identified as a reservoir of unused evolutionary force".[165] But Huxley never subscribed to Heard's scheme of spiritual evolution (this will be discussed in detail in Chapter 6) and Helmholtz's "extra, latent power" can just as plausibly be read as a result of Freudian sublimation, since, he confides to Bernard, he has stopped having sex, and the energy he derives from his newfound celibacy has stimulated his creativity.[166] Moreover, while it is true that Huxley's friendship with Heard dates from 1929, it was not until 1934, when Huxley moved back to London (having spent the previous decade living in Italy and France), that Heard's interest in Eastern philosophy and religion became evident in Huxley's work.[167]

In his 1946 foreword to *Brave New World*, Huxley notes that if he were to rewrite the novel he would include a "third alternative" to the existing choice between the World State and the "Savage Reservation", namely a community in which "economics would be decentralist and Henry-Georgian, politics Kropotkinesque and co-operative", and in which "the conscious and intelligent

162 Quoted in ibid., 128.

163 Jerome Meckier, "A Neglected Huxley 'Preface': His Earliest Synopsis of *Brave New World*", *Twentieth Century Literature* 25, no. 1 (Spring 1979): 8.

164 Ibid., 19n17.

165 Ibid., 8.

166 See Huxley, *Brave New World*, 59.

167 For more on Huxley's relationship with Heard, see Chapter 4.

pursuit of man's Final End, the unitive knowledge of the immanent Tao or Logos, the transcendent Godhead or Brahman" would constitute the religion.[168] This would seem to suggest that, in the novel as it stands, there is no mystical alternative to the technocracy of the World State or the primitivism of Malpais. Moreover, in the summer of 1931, while Huxley was writing the novel, it was art, rather than religion, that he considered the *summum bonum*. In *Jesting Pilate* (1926), Huxley defines modernity as the freedom from history and its concomitant cultural standards;[169] this situation had given rise, in America, to a new era of debased art forms, such as jazz music and the cinema, which portrays a sentimental puerile world bereft of subtlety and ideas.[170] The egregious vulgarity of the mechanised amusements in *Brave New World* reflect Huxley's anxieties about the future of art. Furthermore, in the World State, literature is anathema, since, as Mustapha Mond puts it, "You can't consume much if you sit still and read books".[171] In fact, not only has high art been proscribed in A.F. 632, the stultifying blandness and moronic happiness of the World State has rendered it incomprehensible. You "can't make tragedies", Mustapha Mond informs the "Savage",

> without social instability. The world's stable now. People are happy; they get what they want, and they never want what they can't get. They're well off; they're safe; they're never ill; they're not afraid of death; they're blissfully ignorant of passion and old age; they're plagued with no mothers or fathers; they've got no wives or children, or lovers to feel strongly about; they're so conditioned that they can't help behaving as they ought to behave.[172]

Thus while the poet in Helmholtz Watson admires the language of *Romeo and Juliet*, he finds the extravagant emotions of the play inherently risible.

At this time, Huxley regarded the decline of religion as regrettable; however, this was chiefly due to his anxiety that morality, hitherto the preserve of religion, was being eroded by the amoral ethos of commerce. For instance, in "Personality and the Discontinuity of the Mind" (1927), he disparages the modern "unifying principle" of "social efficiency", which has replaced the old religious ethics, and which prizes those qualities, such as greed, which are associated

168 Huxley, foreword to *Brave New World*, xxx–xxxi.
169 See Aldous Huxley, "America", in *CE* 2: 560.
170 See Aldous Huxley, "Malaya", in *CE* 2: 518.
171 Huxley, *Brave New World*, 42.
172 Ibid., 193–194.

with material wealth.[173] And in *Brave New World*, while Mustapha Mond concedes that there probably is a God, he has become redundant, since the historical role of religion was to afford a compensation for the lost vitality of youth and the imminence of death, whereas now the population enjoys vitality to the very end and has *soma* to console itself.[174] Consequently, in the godless society of the World State, there is no call for heroism, nobility and self-sacrifice – in other words, the very qualities that art celebrates, and it is this loss, of the very subject matter of art, rather than the mere absence of religion, that constitutes the tragedy for John and, I would argue, for Huxley.[175]

Science and Psychical Research

The mystical turn in Huxley's work did not occur until 1935; however, at around the time Huxley wrote *Brave New World*, he had begun to take an interest in psychical research, which seemed to offer a bridge between the worlds of science and spirituality. In the Sullivan interview, he confides: "I have had personal experiences of telepathy which entirely convince me".[176] Huxley is presumably speaking of his experiments with the classicist Gilbert Murray in December 1915. At the time, Huxley was an undergraduate at Balliol College, Oxford, where Murray was Regius Professor of Greek. Murray was also president that year of the Society for Psychical Research (SPR), which attracted many eminent scientists.[177] In a letter to his father, Huxley reports witnessing one of Murray's "thought reading performances".[178] While Murray was out of the room, his daughter Rosalind would think of a scene from a book he had never read and share it with those present, after which Murray would be summoned, and, holding Rosalind's hand, would attempt to describe the scene. After telepathically describing scenes from the novels *Victory* and *Sinister Street* with Rosalind, Murray attempted the same thing with Huxley, who envisaged the Master of Balliol College listening to an essay on *The Egoist* by George Meredith. Murray "stood holding my hand for about half a minute", Huxley writes, "then began to laugh and said 'Oh of course, it's the old Master of Balliol being embarrassed. I'm not clear what about, but I think it's a

173 Aldous Huxley, "Personality and the Discontinuity of the Mind", in *CE* 2: 271.
174 See Huxley, *Brave New World*, 205–206.
175 See ibid., 209.
176 Sullivan, *Contemporary Mind*, 145.
177 E.g. the biologist Alfred Russell Wallace, the physiologist Charles Richet and the physicist Sir Oliver Lodge.
178 Smith, *Letters*, 86.

conversation about a new poet'".[179] Huxley judged this "close enough for a first attempt with an unfamiliar mind" and describes Murray's telepathic ability as "a wonderful gift to possess".[180]

In the essay "Squeak and Gibber" (1931), Huxley discusses the philosopher and psychical researcher C.D. Broad and his notion of the post-mortem survival of a "psychic factor", which, in conjunction with the mind of a medium, enables the medium to access the memories of the dead person.[181] "The dead", writes Huxley, "survive, but only fragmentarily, feebly, as mere wisps of floating memories".[182] The seriousness with which Huxley treats the subject marks a change of attitude from the broad-brush satire he brought to bear on the automatic writing of Mr Barbecue-Smith in *Crome Yellow*. In a letter from 1931, Huxley recommends Broad's book *The Place of Mind in Nature* and *The Ascent of Humanity* by Heard for their examination of psychical research.[183] Huxley's brother Julian became a member of the SPR in 1927, while Heard joined a few years later in 1932.[184] According to the psychical researcher Harry Price, both Huxley brothers investigated the medium Rudi Schneider in 1932.[185]

It was perhaps as a result of Huxley's own psychical research that the subject of spiritualism first appeared in his work. His play *The World of Light*, which was first produced at the Royalty Theatre in March 1931, features a medium named Mr Capes. Hugo Wenham, the play's protagonist, is a philosophy don at Cambridge. Although Hugo's health and spirit are being undermined by his stultifying job as an academic, he is unwilling to relinquish it. Likewise, despite Hugo's aversion for the timid, conventional Enid, he is mindful that he lacks the good looks of his friend Bill Hamblin, and feels duty-bound to marry her. When Hamblin proposes a trip to Guiana, Hugo uses it as an excuse to postpone his marriage. Two months later, Mr Wenham, Hugo's father, receives a communication from the medium Hubert Capes that his son has been killed on board a plane off the coast of Haiti. The plane crash is subsequently confirmed by a telegram from the British Consul. Mr Wenham continues to communicate with his son at a series of séances and eventually publishes a bestselling book

179 Ibid., 86–87.
180 Ibid., 87.
181 Aldous Huxley, "Squeak and Gibber", in *CE* 3: 145.
182 Ibid., 146.
183 See Smith, *Letters*, 347.
184 See *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research* 24 (Mar. 1927): 34 for Julian's membership and *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research* 27 (June 1932): 266, 296 for Heard's. In his *Memories*, Julian Huxley maintains that he joined the SPR in early 1928, but must have misremembered.
185 See Harry Price, *Fifty Years of Psychical Research* (London: Longmans, Green, 1939), 107.

of their spiritualist exchanges. He is therefore mortified when Hugo reappears alive and well. After Hugo reads his father's book, however, he affirms that the information regarding himself is correct and opines that Capes is a clairvoyant rather than a charlatan. Instead of receiving messages from Hugo's spirit (after his death), Capes has been reading Hugo's mind (while alive) by dint of telepathy. Likewise, it was not Hugo's ghost that played the concertina during the séances but "ectoplasm" produced by Capes.[186] In other words, Hugo explains the phenomena of spiritualism using terms and concepts from psychical research. It was F.W.H. Myers who coined the term "telepathy"; Charles Richet was responsible for the concept of "ectoplasm"; and Mr Wenham's book of mediumistic communications with his son is reminiscent of Sir Oliver Lodge's book *Raymond* (1916), in which Lodge records messages he received from his dead son via a number of different mediums.

In 1934, Huxley wrote two essays devoted to the paranormal. In "Mind Reading", he writes: "The reality of telepathic communication was definitely established in the eighties of the last century", and goes on to praise the work of the American parapsychologist J.B. Rhine and his book *Extra-Sensory Perception* (1934).[187] In the essay "Science Turns to the Supernatural", Huxley admits to having "attended a certain number of séances", but concedes that "after sitting for half an hour in a dark and very stuffy room, listening to a gramophone playing the same tune over and over again, I am not prepared to accept even my own testimony of what occurs".[188] In 1937, Huxley and Heard made a lecture tour of America to promote pacifism and ended up settling in Los Angeles. One of the first things Huxley did in America was to pay a visit to J.B. Rhine, with whom he had been corresponding, and to whose newly launched *Journal of Parapsychology* he subscribed. Over the next few years, Huxley became closely involved with the Vedanta Society of Southern California and the former World Teacher of the Theosophical Society Jiddu Krishnamurti (this will be discussed in detail in Chapter 4), but his interest in mysticism co-existed with his interest in the paranormal. In *Ends and Means* (1937), Huxley commends Rhine's work at Duke University and discusses Broad's 1936 presidential address to the SPR, in which he advances the idea of the "existence of some kind of purely mental medium, in which individual minds are bathed, as in a kind of non-physical ether".[189] This hypothesis would account for paranormal phenomena such as

186 Huxley, *The World of Light*, in *Verses and a Comedy: Early Poems, Leda, The Cicadas, The World of Light* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1946), 225.

187 Aldous Huxley, "Mind Reading", in *CE* 3: 165–166.

188 Aldous Huxley, "Science Turns to the Supernatural", in *CE* 3: 171.

189 Huxley, "Beliefs", in *CE* 4: 360.

telepathy. "It would seem, then, that mind, or at any rate something of a mental nature – a 'psychic factor' within a psychic medium – exists independently of the body and of the spatial and temporal conditions of bodily life".[190] Broad would later postulate the "filter" theory of mind, which Huxley propounded in *The Doors of Perception* (1954; discussed below).

Huxley's Perennial Philosophy (which will be analysed in Chapter 3), far from excluding the psychical research of Myers, Rhine, Broad *et al.*, can be easily reconciled with it. For instance, Huxley conceived of paranormal faculties such as telepathy and ESP in terms of the Catholic doctrine of "gratuitous grace" and the Hindu concept of the *siddhis*. Gratuitous graces include the power of healing and precognition; they were deemed "gratuitous" because they were conferred on saint and sinner alike, and were, as Huxley puts it, "neither necessary to, nor sufficient for, salvation".[191] *Siddhis* are magical powers that accrue as a result of spiritual austerities. They are mentioned by Pātañjali in his Yoga Sutras, and include retrocognition (the ability to remember previous lives), bilocation (the ability to be in two places at once), and the ability to make oneself infinitely small, light, heavy and so on.[192] For Huxley, psychics and spirit mediums were the equivalent of yogis who got distracted by the *siddhis* and failed to push ahead to full enlightenment. Furthermore, Huxley attempts to reconcile the doctrine of reincarnation with the phenomena of spiritualism. "The apparent personal entities which psychical research sometimes seems to discover can only be regarded as temporary pseudo-personalities compounded of *x* and the medium's body".[193] For Vedantins, *x* is the *atman*, for Christians *x* is the soul and for Tibetan Buddhists it is the consciousness principle.

Huxley illustrates this theory in *Time Must Have a Stop* (1944), which was published the year before *The Perennial Philosophy* (1945), and features a deft synthesis of spiritualism with Tibetan Buddhism. The lascivious gourmand Eustace Barnack dies of a heart attack in the toilet and is transported into the chikhai bardo (the bardo of the moment of death), in which state he is confronted by the Clear Light of the Void. While he conceives of his residual consciousness principle as something shameful, a "clot of mere privation", he clings to it tenaciously in the face of extinction.[194] In the chönyid bardo (the bardo of the experiencing of Reality), Barnack is subject to karmic apparitions. Huxley substitutes Barnack's memories of divine immanence (a recitation of

190 Ibid.

191 Huxley, *Perennial Philosophy*, 68.

192 See Pātañjali, *The Yoga Sutras of Pātañjali*, trans. Swami Satchidananda (Buckingham: Integral Yoga Publications 2008), 2: 43 (146) and 4: 1 (207).

193 Huxley, *Perennial Philosophy*, 215.

194 Huxley, *Time*, 138.

Mozart's Ave Verum Corpus, the Maize God from Copan, the "Vale of the White Horse as the July sunshine poured down with a kind of desperate intensity") for the traditional dawning of the peaceful deities described in the Bardo Thödol, and memories of the polymorphous perverse (the breasts of a prostitute he frequented, the exquisite enemas he received from his buxom nanny, sitting on the toilet eating liquorice) for the dawning of the wrathful deities.[195] It is while Barnack is in the chönyid bardo that he is summoned to a séance being conducted by the medium Mrs Byfleet at the behest of his mother-in-law. Thanks to Mrs Byfleet, Barnack is able to re-experience embodiment, but his irreverent witticisms are misconstrued by Byfleet and Bettina (her control) as Christian platitudes. In a subsequent séance, Barnack enters the sidpa bardo (the bardo of rebirth), and, still jealously guarding his selfhood, recognises in the "living uterine darkness" of Mrs Weyl (one of the participants of the séance) a "permanent deliverance" from what he perceives to be the annihilation of union with the Clear Light.[196] The spiritualist phenomena of *Time Must Have a Stop*, then, is explained in terms of the Bardo Thödol. The temporary pseudo-personality of Eustace Barnack makes his presence known at the séance as a compound of *x* (his consciousness principle) plus the body of the medium (Mrs Byfleet).

It is unclear at what stage Huxley read F.W.H. Myers. The first mention of Myers in his correspondence occurs in a letter to J.B. Rhine in March 1951, in which Huxley suggests that Rhine put together an anthology of parapsychology, including the founding fathers of the SPR. In particular, Huxley recommends Myers's "hypothesis of mental structure" in *Human Personality and Its Survival of Bodily Death* (1903).[197] For Myers, there is a supraliminal mind (i.e. the mind above the threshold or limen), which corresponds to the ego, and a heterogeneous mass of subliminal *minds* beneath the threshold. These subliminal minds or selves only rise above the limen in altered states of consciousness, such as dreams, trance, ecstasy and trauma. For example, a medium during a séance would enter into a trance and thereby gain access to these subliminal streams of consciousness. The information allegedly received from discarnate spirits could, according to Myers, derive instead from the subliminal selves of the living participants of the séance communicating telepathically with the subliminal self of the medium. But while the phenomena of spiritualism could be thus explained in terms of the subliminal mind, Myers affirmed that his

195 Ibid., 165.
196 Ibid., 252.
197 See Smith, *Letters*, 634.

theory in fact supported what he called the "spirit-hypothesis".[198] Speaking of telepathy, Myers writes: "if our incarnate spirits can act thus in at least apparent independence of the fleshly body, the presumption is strong that other spirits may exist independently of the body".[199]

In *The Devils of Loudun*, Huxley grafts Myers' model of the psyche onto those of Freud and Jung and incorporates his mystical notion of the divine Ground. "Outside the central chamber" of the soul, Huxley writes,

> between the divine Ground and the conscious self, lies the subliminal mind, almost impersonal at its melting fringe, but crystallizing, as the phenomenal self is approached, into the personal subconscious with its accumulations of septic rubbish, its swarms of rats and black beetles and its occasional scorpions and vipers. This personal subconscious is the haunt of our indwelling criminal lunatic, the locus of Original Sin. But the fact that the ego is associated with a maniac is not incompatible with the fact that it is also associated (all unconsciously) with the divine Ground. We are born with Original Sin; but we are also born with Original Virtue – with a capacity for grace [...] Freudian psychologists pay far more attention to Original Sin than to Original Virtue. They pore over the rats and the black beetles, but are reluctant to see the inner light. Jung and his followers have shown themselves to be somewhat more realistic. Overstepping the limits of the personal subconscious, they have begun to explore the realm where the mind, growing more and more impersonal, merges into the psychic medium, out of which individual selves are crystallized. Jungian psychology goes beyond the immanent maniac, but stops short of the immanent God.[200]

For Huxley, then, there exists a psychic continuum between the ego and the divine Ground, with the personal unconscious, the subliminal mind and the collective unconscious in between. When Huxley began to experiment with mescaline and LSD in 1953, he also relied on ideas from key thinkers associated with psychical research, namely Broad, Henri Bergson and William James, all past presidents of the SPR, who all endorsed the filter or filtration model of consciousness.

198 F.W.H. Myers, *Human Personality and Its Survival of Bodily Death*, 2 vols. (New York: Longmans, Green, 1903), 1: 16.

199 Ibid.

200 Huxley, *Devils*, 103–104.

Hitherto, Huxley had attempted to experience mystical union through the conventional means of meditation, but without success. On mescaline, however, he was able to experience key elements of mystical union, such as the transcendence of the ego, the concomitant identification with the divine Ground, and the apprehension of the world in its metaphysical aspect. Reflecting on his mescaline experience in *The Doors of Perception*, Huxley writes:

> I find myself agreeing with the eminent Cambridge philosopher, Dr C.D. Broad, "that we should do well to consider [...] the type of theory which Bergson put forward in connection with memory and sense perception. The suggestion is that the function of the brain and nervous system and sense organs is in the main eliminative and not productive. Each person is at each moment capable of remembering all that has ever happened to him and of perceiving everything that is happening everywhere in the universe. The function of the brain and nervous system is to protect us from being overwhelmed and confused by this mass of largely useless and irrelevant knowledge, by shutting out most of what we should otherwise perceive or remember at any moment, and leaving only that very small and special selection which is likely to be practically useful". According to such a theory, each one of us is potentially Mind at Large. But in so far as we are animals, our business is at all costs to survive. To make biological survival possible, Mind at Large has to be funnelled through the reducing valve of the brain and nervous system. What comes out at the other end is a measly trickle of the kind of consciousness which will help us to stay alive on the surface of this particular planet.[201]

This notion of the brain as a filter rather than a producer of consciousness seems at first counter-intuitive. In *Human Immortality* (1898), William James argues that the brain does not produce thought, as a kettle produces steam, it transmits it like a prism that refracts light, but does not produce the light.[202] In the case of the kettle, James notes, water and steam are "physically homogeneous", whereas in the case of the material brain and immaterial consciousness they are substantially different.[203]

It is the old problem of Cartesian dualism: how can a physical brain give rise to a metaphysical consciousness? A more contemporary analogy is to compare

201 Huxley, *Doors*, in *CE* 5: 163–164.

202 See William James, *Human Immortality: Two Supposed Objections to the Doctrine* (Cambridge, MA: Riverside Press, 1898), 13–14.

203 Ibid., 21–22.

the brain to a computer, which subjectively filters the Internet, and leaves behind traces of its activity in the form of cookies (which record Internet searches and preferences). To someone who had no knowledge of the Internet, he or she would assume that the information the computer user accessed came from inside the computer rather than wirelessly via the abstract concept known as the Internet. Likewise, for those of us with no first-hand knowledge of mystical union, it is easy to assume that thought originates in the brain rather than the abstract concept of the divine Ground or "Mind at Large". In his presidential address to the SPR in 1913, Henri Bergson argues that the past is never forgotten, but the brain's job is to focus our attention on the present and therefore the field of consciousness is restricted. It is only at the brink of death, when this survival mechanism is relaxed, that the past in its entirety washes over us.[204] Memory is a good example of the filtration function of the brain: our grasp of the past is rendered subjective by being filtered through memory, just as our perception of Mind at Large is rendered subjective by being filtered through our senses. For Huxley, the mystic in a state of mystical union enjoys a kind of broadband access to the divine Ground or Mind at Large. It is from this ineffable experience that mystics derive their wisdom, insight and authority. In Huxley's model, psychics and mediums are granted greater access to the divine Ground, much less than mystics but much more than ordinary consciousness, and this enables them to read other people's minds, or to describe memories attached to objects and places, or to view the future or the past (since in the divine Ground there is no time and past, present and future are melded into eternity).

Huxley also took a keen interest in mesmerism and the work of the Scottish surgeon James Esdaile, who provided hypnotic anaesthesia for his patients in Calcutta in the 1840s.[205] But, as Huxley notes in "Science Turns to the Supernatural", the medical community failed to acknowledge his work because there was no satisfactory explanation of hypnosis in physical terms, and the psychological explanation posited by the surgeon James Braid in 1841 was ignored because the concept of the unconscious had yet to gain widespread acceptance. With the advent of spiritualism and trance mediums, hypnosis became tarred with the brush of occultism, and it was not until 1892 that the British Medical Association officially recognised hypnotism.[206] Huxley likened the scientific

204 See Henri Bergson, "'Phantasms of the Living' and Psychical Research", in *Mind Energy: Essays and Lectures*, trans. H. Wildon Carr (New York: Henry Holt, 1929), 94–95.

205 See Alison Winter, *Mesmerized: Powers of Mind in Victorian Britain* (London: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 190–191.

206 See Huxley, "Science Turns to the Supernatural", in *CE* 3: 178–179.

disavowal of mesmerism in the nineteenth century to the disavowal of ESP in the twentieth century.[207] Since telepathy and psychokinesis involved action at a distance, which was a priori impossible for materialists, they regarded paranormal phenomena as "the equivalent of indecent behaviour" and judged the "literature of the subject a kind of scientific pornography".[208]

In *Island* (1962), the character of Dr Andrew is loosely modelled on James Esdaile, insofar as he's a Scottish surgeon who practises medicine in India in the middle of the nineteenth century and uses "magnetic passes" to induce an anaesthetic trance. Dr Andrew is asked to treat the Raja of Pala, who has a large tumour in his face, and, this being prior to the discovery of chloroform and effective antisepsis, he determines that the enfeebled Raja will almost certainly die on the operating table. In desperation, he remembers an article in *The Lancet* denouncing the animal magnetism of John Elliotson, who "had the effrontery to talk of painless operations performed on patients in the mesmeric trance".[209] By performing magnetic passes on the Raja he puts him into a trance in which the Raja is able to breathe normally (the tumour had obstructed his airway and made swallowing painful). Using hypnotic suggestion, he enables the Raja to eat without pain and this allows him to build up his strength in preparation for the operation, which Dr Andrew performs with the aid of hypnotic anaesthesia. One of the great advantages, Huxley notes in an essay, afforded by this type of anaesthesia was that the patient remained in a trance for several hours after the operation, during which time the *vis medicatrix naturae* could do its work, unhampered by the ego.[210] After the Raja's operation, Dr Andrew puts him into a trance for sixteen hours a day for a week, allowing his body to recover and his wounds to heal without infection.[211] He subsequently uses hypnotic suggestion on the Raja's daughter, who is convinced that she and her child will die in labour as a result of seeing three black birds: under hypnosis, he informs her that in Scotland black birds are auspicious and associated with favourable births, and that she shall feel no pain during labour, thereby ensuring a successful childbirth.[212] As a result, Dr Andrew teaches hypnosis to midwives, doctors, teachers and mothers, who use it for a variety of treatments. And when Will Farnaby arrives on Pala with an injured knee and running a high temperature, Susila uses hypnosis on him.[213]

207 See Aldous Huxley, "A Case of Voluntary Ignorance", in *CE* 6: 60–61, 67.
208 Huxley, "Mind Reading", in *CE* 3: 165.
209 Huxley, *Island*, 123.
210 See Huxley, "A Case of Voluntary Ignorance", in *CE* 6: 63.
211 See Huxley, *Island*, 127.
212 See ibid., 127–128.
213 See ibid., 31–35.

Huxley also practised hypnotism on himself and others. In a letter from 1952, Huxley writes that "three or four years ago" an intestinal infection had left his wife Maria in a state of "nervous exhaustion", and that she found relief in hypnotherapy.[214] Since then, Huxley had become a "good hypnotic operator" and had been using it to help Maria recover from having a tumour removed. Huxley himself had received "hypnotic treatments" to help him sleep and to endure the pain of a recent bout of iritis, and he had also learnt self-hypnosis in order to quell his anxiety that the iritis might further undermine his damaged eyesight.[215] In a letter to Rhine, Huxley mentions that Maria had an episode of precognition while undergoing a "visionary experience under hypnosis".[216] In her vision, Maria saw a book that she thought was on alchemy in which there appeared strange writing, which, judging from her sketches, Huxley thought might be Hebrew, with the page numbers in Roman numerals. The next day, at a surrealist art exhibition, they were shown a book by Manly P. Hall on alchemy, which featured illustrations bearing Hebrew lettering and page numbers in Roman numerals.[217] As this letter suggests, Huxley was intrigued by the use of hypnosis to induce visionary experience (Huxley, unlike Maria, was unable to enjoy this himself), as well as paranormal phenomena, and he was friends with Leslie LeCron, who used hypnosis in his psychotherapy practice, and was an authority on the subject.

LeCron was one of the participants in the Huxleys' Tuesday-night explorations of paranormal phenomena in the early 1950s.[218] He was interested in using hypnosis to achieve "unorthodox healing", to produce visionary experience and psi phenomena, and he published an article on hypnosis and the pararnormal in the magazine *Tomorrow*, edited by Eileen Garrett.[219] Garrett was a trance medium and clairvoyant whom Huxley had met in the years of World War I when she ran a tea room in Hampstead.[220] She was investigated by the American SPR in 1931 and was one of J.B. Rhine's first research subjects, and went on to fund his parapsychology laboratory at Duke University with money provided by one of her clients, Congresswoman Frances P. Bolton, one

214 See Smith, *Letters*, 646.
215 See ibid. 646–647.
216 See ibid., 681.
217 See ibid.
218 See David King Dunaway, *Huxley in Hollywood* (n.p.: Endeavour Press, 2017), 320, Kindle.
219 See Allene Symons, *Aldous Huxley's Hands: His Quest for Perception and the Origin and Return of Psychedelic Science* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 2015), 108 and Leslie LeCron, "The Paranormal in Hypnosis", *Tomorrow* (Spring 1955).
220 Dunaway, *Huxley in Hollywood*, 304.

of the richest women in America at the time.[221] In 1951, she established the Parapsychology Foundation in New York and hosted an annual parapsychology conference in St-Paul-de-Vence, which Huxley attended in 1954 and 1961.[222] Huxley published the essay ("Visionary Experience, Visionary Art and the Other World") that in book form became *Heaven and Hell* (1956) in Garrett's magazine *Tomorrow*.[223] In a letter to the psychic Elise Murrell (who, Smith notes, "had had an apparently clairvoyant experience at the moment of Maria Huxley's death"), Huxley writes that "Maria has appeared to [Garrett] several times since her death", and passed on the following messages: "I didn't hear the whole of the Bardle", i.e. the Bardo Thödol, and "I found the Eggart [...] very helpful", meaning Meister Eckhart, "whose tremendous phrase, 'The eye with which we see God is the same as the eye with which God sees us'", Huxley had repeated to Maria while she was dying.[224]

In August 1955, Huxley visited the Round Table Foundation, a research centre for ESP, in Glen Cove, Maine. Huxley had been corresponding with its director Dr Andrija Puharich, who had investigated Eileen Garrett.[225] At Glen Cove, Huxley met the ESP sensitive Harry Stump, whom he describes as a "Dutch sculptor, who goes into trances in the Faraday cages and produces automatic scripts in Egyptian hieroglyphics".[226] In the same letter (to Eileen Garrett) Huxley adumbrates Puharich's project:

> His aim is to reproduce by modern pharmacological, electronic and physical methods the conditions used by the shamans for getting into a state of travelling clairvoyance and then, if he succeeds, to send people to explore systemically "the Other World". This seems to be as good a new approach to the survival problem [...] as any of the rest, and may yield some interesting results.[227]

At the time of Huxley's visit, Puharich had located some samples of the psychoactive mushroom *Amanita muscaria* on the estate by using a Ouija board.

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221 See Symons, *Aldous Huxley's Hands*, 37, 126, 143.

222 See ibid., 153, 206.

223 See Smith, *Letters*, 727–728.

224 Ibid., 746–747.

225 In the volumes of Huxley's letters edited by Sexton and Smith, Puharich's first name is given as Henry. His first name was actually Karel, but his Croatian parents changed it to Henry Karl. Andrija was his nickname, but in later life Puharich adopted it as his first name.

226 Smith, *Letters*, 761.

227 Ibid.

In his book *The Sacred Mushroom* (1959), Puharich recalls Huxley observing a telepathy experiment involving Stump, who went into a trance and began channelling the Egyptian control Ra Ho Tep, who demanded one of the psychoactive mushrooms and, under its influence, claimed to be able to perceive the room next door. Puharich blindfolded Stump and had him perform a test, in which Stump had to match two sets of ten wooden blocks with the same picture printed on one side. After some initial hesitation, Stump rapidly matched all the blocks; Puharich notes that the statistical chances of achieving this at random are one in a million.[228] Stump would later claim in his memoirs that Huxley was telepathic. He implies that much of their communication at Glen Cove was conducted telepathically; he even goes so far as to write: "Sometimes Aldous and I communicated through words".[229] But if Huxley was, as Stump maintains, telepathic, it seems odd that those closest to him were unaware of his gift, and that Huxley never once mentioned his telepathic faculty to a correspondent. It seems more likely that Stump projected his psychic ability onto Huxley and imagined conversations with him.

Garrett was not the only medium to participate in the Huxleys' Tuesday-night sessions. On his maiden visit with the Huxleys in May 1953, Humphry Osmond witnessed the medium Sophia Williams, who emitted "strange little voices", and who served as inspiration for the Huxley story "Voices" (1955).[230] On a subsequent visit the following year, Osmond witnessed the hypnotic regression of one of Huxley's guests to previous incarnations.[231] Osmond shared Huxley's openminded attitude to the paranormal and his colleague John Smythies was a member of the SPR. It seems likely that Huxley's post-mortem messages from Maria, in conjunction with his renewed interest in paranormal phenomena, led Huxley finally to join the SPR in 1956.[232]

Huxley's character Paul de Vries, in *Time Must Have a Stop*, takes an interest in psychical research and reads the *Proceedings* of the SPR, which, he informs Eustace Barnack, provides strong evidence for telepathy and psychokinesis. He

228 See Andrija Puharich, *The Sacred Mushroom: Key to the Door of Eternity* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1974), 97–98. Puharich gives Stump the pseudonym Harry Stone. See also Partridge, *High Culture*, 305–306.

229 Quoted in Lloyd Ferriss, *Harry Stump: Maine's Psychic Sculptor* (n.p.: Maine Authors Publishing, 2014), 83, Kindle.

230 See Osmond's letters to Huxley on May 13, 1953 and July 28, 1955 in *Psychedelic Prophets: The Letters of Aldous Huxley and Humphry Osmond*, ed. Cynthia Carson Bisbee, Paul Bisbee, Erica Dyck, *et al.* (London: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2018), 13, 201.

231 See Symons, *Aldous Huxley's Hands*, 167.

232 For Huxley's membership of the SPR, see *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research* 50 (1956): 305.

conceives of his job as a "*pontifex minimus*", or little bridge builder, attempting to bridge the gap between mediumistic phenomena and the data of hard science. "For a synthesis there undoubtedly must be", he reflects,

> a thought-bridge that would permit the mind to march discursively and logically from telepathy to the four-dimensional continuum, from poltergeists and departed spirits to the physiology of the nervous system. And beyond the happenings of the séance room there was [...] the Brahma of Sankara, the One of Plotinus, the Ground of Eckhart and Boehme.[233]

While Bradshaw has suggested J.W.N. Sullivan as the model for de Vries, since he speaks of the importance of Einstein's relativity theory in reinstating idealism and refuting the "Victorians' nightmare universe of infinitesimal billiard balls",[234] it should be noted that Huxley also saw himself as a *pontifex minimus* whose interest in science never blinded him to the evidence for the paranormal, and whose interest in alternative spirituality never prevented him from perceiving the earthly advantages that science could confer. After the broadside on mechanism in *Brave New World*, psychical research offered Huxley a rapprochement with science, on the one hand, and a scientific, or at least pseudo-scientific, entrée to the world of mesmerism, mediums and telepathy on the other. In many ways, this paved the way for his mystical turn in 1935, and thereafter he attempted to build a theoretical bridge between spirituality, science and the paranormal. This can be seen, for instance, in the long quotations above from *The Devils of Loudun* and *The Doors of Perception*.[235]

Another thought-bridge that Huxley advanced from the mid-1950s onwards that attempted to incorporate these different discourses was the notion that humans were "amphibians" who inhabited, simultaneously or alternately, "many different and even incommensurable universes".[236] With its emphasis on the multitudinous, contradictory aspects of human being it recalls his earlier philosophy of life worship, but Huxley is no longer attempting to psychologise or secularise spiritual experience. "Every human being", writes Huxley, "is a conscious self; but, below the threshold of consciousness every human being is also a not-self – or, more precisely, he is five or six merging but clearly distinguishable not-selves". He is (i) the "personal, home-made not-self", i.e. the Freudian pre- and unconscious; (ii) "the not-self in charge of the body" who

233 Huxley, *Time*, 91–92.

234 Quoted in Bradshaw, "Best of Companions" (Aug. 1996), 367–368.

235 For more on Huxley and the paranormal, see Poller, "Beyond the Subliminal Mind".

236 Aldous Huxley, "The Education of an Amphibian", in *CE* 5: 191.

attends to digestion, respiration, the immune system, etc.; (iii) "the not-self who inhabits the world from which we derive our insights and inspirations", in other words the subliminal mind that, on the one hand, was responsible for *Kubla Khan* and *King Lear*, and that, on the other, allows for paranormal faculties such as telepathy; (iv) the not-self who inhabits the "world of what Jung has called the Archetypes – those great shared symbols which stand for man's deepest tendencies, his perennial conflicts and ubiquitous problems"; (v) the not-self of "visionary experience" who encounters "non-human facts – facts from which the theologians of the various religions have derived their notions of the Other World, of Heaven and Hell"; and (vi) there is the "universal Not-self, which men have called the Holy Spirit, the Atman-Brahman, the Clear Light, Suchness".[237]

Huxley also tried to show, in his final novel *Island*, that utopia required a community that made the "best of both worlds", the world of applied science and the world of Mahayana and Zen Buddhism.[238] Dr Andrew introduces modern medicine to Pala, and, in order to forestall the famine he witnessed in Madras, cultivates more robust strains of indigenous crops and better breeds of cattle and chickens.[239] But in the "fields of applied metaphysics and psychology", the Palanese are far more advanced than Dr Andrew, who embraces their Buddhist approach to life and decides to remain on the island.[240] By the time Will Farnaby fetches up on Pala, the population are practising positive eugenics, and Shanta predicts that in a hundred years' time the average IQ will be 115.[241] The denizens of Pala, then, are using science to help realise "the highest human aspirations", whereas the economist World Controllers of *Brave New World* use science to produce a race of homogenous "mass-producers and mass-consumers".[242] For Wells, the truly scientific society was a World State in which the population subsumed their individuality in service of the new religion, which would be the evolutionary perfection of *Homo sapiens*,[243] whereas Huxley was keen to show that science need not lead to "greater centralization of power in ever fewer hands",[244] but that it could be used to create economic self-sufficiency, environmental sustainability and political anarchism, as can be seen in the utopia of *Island*. The Palanese perceive that, to borrow Huxley's

237 Ibid., 196.
238 Huxley, *Island*, 220–221.
239 See ibid., 83.
240 Ibid., 220.
241 See ibid., 188.
242 Huxley, "Science and Civilization", 150.
243 See Wells, *What Are We to Do?*, 33 and Wagar, *H.G. Wells and the World State*, 217.
244 Aldous Huxley, "Science, Liberty, and Peace", in *CE* 5: 261–262.

phrase, applied science was made for humans, not humans for applied science.[245]

It is significant that Huxley's last book was titled *Literature and Science* (1963), which alludes to T.H. Huxley's *Science and Culture* (1880), in which he rebutted some of Matthew Arnold's claims that scientific materialism was incompatible with the "sweetness and light" of culture. The debate in the 1880s between Huxley and Arnold over the respective importance of science and the humanities in education was rehashed some eighty years later by C.P. Snow and F.R. Leavis. In the 1959 Rede lecture "The Two Cultures and the Scientific Revolution", Snow bemoaned the rift between literature and science and argued that the educational system still valorised the humanities over science; while Leavis, in the 1962 Richmond lecture "Two Cultures?: The Significance of C.P. Snow", attacked Snow's credentials both as a novelist and a scientist. Huxley's book *Literature and Science* is an attempt to refine the debate, since, he opines, there's little to choose between the "bland scientism" of Snow and the "violent and ill-tempered, the one-track, moralistic literalism" of Leavis.[246] On balance, Huxley inclines more towards Snow's position, in that he held, on the one hand, that men and women of letters should not turn their back on science like Keats for fear of unweaving the rainbow, and that, on the other, scientists should acknowledge that they deal with but one of the many worlds in which humans, as a result of their multiple amphibiousness, have their motley being. In the "Age of Science", essayists and novelists must keep abreast of scientific developments and ruminate on their relevance to religion, politics, ethics and philosophy.[247] While Huxley affirms that scientists should also be aware of new research in the humanities, the onus is on writers to disseminate scientific and technological advances to a broader audience.

But Huxley also imposes his mystical concerns on the debate. He suggests that both the practitioners of science and of the humanities are approaching the same goal via different paths. The "literary artist" employs a "purified" and innovative language (as opposed to the hackneyed language of "the tribe") to convey unspeakably private experiences, and for Huxley the ultimate, most unspeakably private experience is mystical union with the divine Ground, and he provides examples from Meister Eckhart, John of the Cross, Henry Suso *et al.*[248] The scientist also employs a purified language, but one that prizes

245 This phrase can be found, in a slightly altered form, in a letter to Julian Huxley written on Dec. 9, 1946, in Smith, *Letters*, 557, as well as *Eyeless in Gaza* (1936), "Science, Liberty, and Peace" (1946) and the foreword to *Brave New World*.

246 Aldous Huxley, *Literature and Science*, in CE 6: 90.

247 See ibid., 127–128.

248 See ibid., 102.

lucidity (rather than poetry or originality), abjures ambiguity and relies on jargon and mathematical formulae to describe or account for more public, repeatable, universal experiences.[249] Where literary artists and mystics attempt to express the ineffable union between self and a monistic godhead or divine Ground, the ultimate goal for scientists is the "creation of a monistic system", in which "the world's enormous multiplicity is reduced to something like unity".[250] It should be noted, though, that only "literary artists" such as Huxley, with an avowed interest in mysticism, strove for the former, and only mystically inclined scientists, such as Schrödinger and Eddington, attempted to find a unified theory that was metaphysically rather than materially monistic. Huxley includes a long quotation from Heisenberg, which states that, as a result of the uncertainty principle, scientists have stopped striving for knowledge of the atom or proton "in itself", and the knowledge they possess of elementary particles represents a "dialogue between nature and man"; consequently, the "division of the world into subject and object, into inner world and outer world, body and soul, is no longer applicable".[251] This elision of Cartesian dualism puts Huxley in mind of the experience of mystical union. "Carried far enough", he writes, "the analysis of man's public experiences comes, in theory at least, to the same conclusion as is reached, existentially in the most private of all experiences – infused contemplation, *samadhi*, *satori*".[252]

Deery, commenting on this passage, is scandalised by Heisenberg's introduction of unscientific terms such as "soul" and "inner world", and judges his comments as "curiously misleading, even irresponsible".[253] The orthodox reading of the Copenhagen interpretation, Deery points out, which was co-formulated by Heisenberg, holds that the "interaction of the observer and object" is the "only reality, not an interference in something more objective beyond".[254] Heisenberg, like Schrödinger, was interested in Indian philosophy, and was nicknamed "the Buddha".[255] When he asserts that insofar as quantum physics is "nature subjected to human questioning […] man, once again, meets only with himself",[256] he seems to be echoing the position of Eddington, who

249 See ibid., 92.
250 Ibid., 94.
251 Ibid., 130. See also Werner Heisenberg, *The Physicist's Conception of Nature*, trans. Arnold J. Pomerans (London: Hutchinson, 1958), 24.
252 Huxley, *Literature and Science*, in CE 6: 130.
253 Deery, *Mysticism of Science*, 65.
254 Ibid.
255 See ibid. 146 and Olav Hammer, *Claiming Knowledge: Strategies of Epistemology from Theosophy to the New Age* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 279.
256 Quoted in Huxley, *Literature and Science*, in CE 6: 130.

famously asserted that "we have found that where science has progressed the farthest, the mind has but regained from nature that which the mind has put into nature", and concludes that physicists have "found a strange footprint on the shores of the unknown", only to discover that "it is our own".[257] This appears to be how Huxley is reading him in *Literature and Science*, as an Eddingtonian idealist who maintains that matter is actually "mind-stuff", but Huxley clarifies his position in a letter to the philosopher Edwin Burtt:

> The traditional Indian idea [of *nama-rupa*] that the universe known to man is largely home-made – that we fabricate our worlds by imposing upon the given continuum an all too human system of names and forms (a form being a projected name and a name, an internalized form) – seems to come very close to the ideas of modern physics. Heisenberg, for example, insists that "man meets only with himself", that the scientist studies only the world as he himself has transformed, and in some sort re-created it by the imposition upon reality of his various frames of reference.[258]

This tallies with Heisenberg's reflections in *Physics and Philosophy* (1959) on the limitations of language: "Our scientific work in physics consists in asking questions about nature in the language that we possess and trying to get an answer from experiment by the means that are at our disposal. In this way quantum theory reminds us, as Bohr has put it [...] that in the drama of existence we are ourselves both players and spectators".[259] Huxley goes on to argue, in his letter to Burtt, that where scientists can only apprehend the world through the veil of their concepts and classifications, mystics can apprehend the world with the pristine perceptions of infants, free from the procrustean conditioning of language.[260]

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257 A.S. Eddington, *Space, Time and Gravitation: An Outline of the General Relativity Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1920), 200. Indeed, this quotation from Eddington can also be found in Heisenberg, *Physicist's Conception of Nature*, 153, whence Huxley excerpted the Heisenberg quotation in *Literature and Science*.

258 Aldous Huxley, letter to Edwin A. Burtt (Jan. 28, 1963), in *Aldous Huxley Annual* 10/11 (2010–11): 236–237.

259 Werner Heisenberg, *Physics and Philosophy: The Revolution in Modern Science* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1959), 57.

260 For Huxley, this was one of the great boons of the psychedelic experience, that it restored the "perceptual innocence of childhood, when the sensum was not immediately and automatically subordinated to the concept" (*Doors*, in CE 5: 165).

Huxley's attempts to forge a link between science and alternative spirituality paved the way for popular New Age books, such as *The Tao of Physics* (1975) by Fritjof Capra, which will be discussed in Chapter 6. His stance in *Literature and Science* differs from that expressed in *Those Barren Leaves*, for whereas Calamy attempts to use the new physics to foster a belief in mysticism, Huxley, writing in 1963, was searching for a more capacious science that would accommodate his spiritual convictions. He was also convinced by the statistical evidence for ESP presented by Rhine and the SPR and hoped that psychical research would throw an epistemological bridge between science and spirituality. Given that Huxley conceived of the ego as existing in a psychic continuum with a godhead or cosmic mind, his conviction that mystics and scientists were converging on a monistic Ground made perfect sense, with the former making their approach from the inside out and the latter the outside in. In a letter from 1915, Huxley writes: "I think we shall ultimately work all the disorder into a single principle, which will be an Absolute";[261] almost forty years later, Huxley was still of the same mind. Baker complains that Huxley "never adequately explained how Western and Eastern perspectives could be reconciled",[262] but in *Island* he portrayed a utopian community that successfully integrated Western science and Eastern spirituality (Tantra, Zen and Mahayana Buddhism), and he repeatedly emphasised in his essays that we must make the "best of both worlds".

Conclusion

As a young man, Huxley was both attracted and repelled by science and mysticism. In the mid-1920s, he hoped that the two might be compatible, in that the mystical reading of the new physics propounded by Sullivan and Eddington supported an idealist worldview. But Huxley soon abandoned this position and under the influence of Lawrence began to promote his humanist philosophy of life worship. Huxley was still a life worshipper in 1931 when he composed *Brave New World*, and was sceptical of Wells' scientific utopias and rejected Wells' notion of a world government run by scientists and industrialists. Thus *Brave New World*, *pace* David Bradshaw, is in fact a satire on "the horror of the Wellsian Utopia" as Huxley put it in a letter to his brother.[263] Even before his mystical turn in 1935, Huxley had become interested in psychical research, and sought

261 Smith, *Letters*, 73.

262 Robert S. Baker, introduction to *CE* 6, xv.

263 See Smith, *Letters*, 348.

to reconcile its findings with both science and spirituality. It is apt that his final book was titled *Literature and Science*, and was an attempt to combine the scientific materialism of T.H. Huxley with the aesthetic, spiritual culture of Matthew Arnold. After his death, Huxley's efforts to marry science and alternative spirituality were taken up by New Age spiritual seekers, who argued that quantum physics and relativity theory valorised their holistic spiritual worldview and discredited the mechanistic Newtonian paradigm, which had led to the disenchantment of the world and the instrumental exploitation of nature.[264]

264 See Chapter 6 for details.

CHAPTER 3

The Perennial Philosophy

In order to contextualise Huxley's notion of the Perennial Philosophy, a number of similar traditions and terms that relate to an ancient wisdom religion need to be identified and differentiated, namely the *prisca theologia*, the *philosophia perennis*, the Theosophy of H.P. Blavatsky, Traditionalism and perennialism. In addition, I briefly examine the neo-Vedanta and neo-Advaita tradition, and their claims of universalism, since the Perennial Philosophy is often conflated with these traditions and wrongly represented as universalist in the strong sense. I also situate the Perennial Philosophy in the context of the study of mysticism in the twentieth century and interrogate the influential theories and typologies advanced by William James, Rudolf Otto, William Stace and Steven Katz.

The Ancient Wisdom Tradition: From the *Prisca Theologia* to Traditionalism

The term *prisca theologia* (ancient or venerable theology) was introduced by Marsilio Ficino in the fifteenth century. Cosimo de' Medici, the ruler of Florence, had received a manuscript of Plato's complete dialogues and commissioned Ficino to translate them into Latin. At this time, as a result of the work of Middle- and Neoplatonists, Plato had been transformed from a philosopher into the founder of a "religious worldview with its own mythologies and ritual practices", which derived from an ancient wisdom tradition in the "Orient".[1] A number of divinely inspired sages were construed as exponents of this *prisca theologia* (Moses, Hermes Trismegistus, Zoroaster, Orpheus, Pythagorus *et al.*), but who took precedence among the *prisci theologi* depended on one's nationality or religion: Egyptians claimed Hermes as the *fons et origo*; Persians affirmed that it was Zoroaster; while the Greeks advanced Orpheus or Pythagorus.[2] For the Christian apologists of the second to the fifth century CE, who were intent on reconciling Platonism with Christianity, Greek philosophy and the pagan wisdom of Hermes and Zoroaster derived from Moses, who had

1 Hanegraaff, *Esotericism and the Academy*, 12.

2 See ibid., 5–6 and Schmitt, "Perennial Philosophy", 508.

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received it directly from Jehovah.[3] Christianity was presented as the restoration and apotheosis of this tradition, which had been corrupted by demons, whom the pagans worshipped as their gods. The implication was that Hermes *et al.* either derived their wisdom from Moses second hand or were inspired by the divine Logos (Christ), prior to his incarnation. Consequently, St Augustine could write: "The very thing which is now called the Christian religion was with the ancients, and it was with the human race from its beginning to the time when Christ appeared in the flesh: from when on the true religion, which already existed, began to be called the Christian".[4]

Ficino believed that the wisdom of the *prisca theologia* had most recently been lost as a result of medieval Aristotelianism, which had eclipsed the religious Platonism described above.[5] Hence Ficino regarded the newly rediscovered *Corpus Hermeticum* and *Chaldean Oracles*, allegedly authored by Hermes and Zoroaster respectively but later proved to be relatively recent (second-third century CE) forgeries, as a providential means to reconstruct the *prisca theologia*. Unlike the Christian apologists, Ficino maintained that Zoroaster was the oldest of the *prisci theologi*, with the troubling implication that the Jewish and Christian religions were ultimately pagan in origin. The Christian Kabbalah promoted by Giovanni Pico della Mirandola has been interpreted as a corrective to Ficino's view.[6] Pico asserted that on Mt Sinai Moses had received an esoteric teaching, namely the Kabbalah, in addition to the tablets of the Law, and been told to keep this secret, only revealing it to "Jesus Nave".[7] The Jews had jealously guarded the Kabbalah, but Pico, having read the kabbalistic scriptures, disclosed that they contained unmistakably Christian doctrines. The Kabbalah, Pico affirmed, was the ultimately Christian source for the Hebrew, Platonic and pagan religions. The fifteenth century was fraught with millenarian expectations, and Pico believed that now that he had revealed the true source of the *prisca theologia*, all the Jews would convert to Christianity, possibly even precipitating the Apocalypse.[8] However, the Jews continued to regard the Kabbalah as belonging to the Hebrew tradition, and the mass conversion Pico was anticipating did not take place. The various discourses

3 See Hanegraaff, *Esotericism and the Academy*, 16–20.

4 Quoted in ibid., 9.

5 See ibid., 51. Hanegraaff, following John Walbridge, uses the term "Platonic Orientalism".

6 Although, as Hanegraaff points out, as far as Ficino was concerned Plato, Moses, Hermes *et al.* were all divinely inspired by God, or by Christ *qua* the eternal Logos, and so their chronological order is irrelevant, and the *prisci theologi* were ultimately espousing a Christian wisdom (see ibid., 50).

7 See ibid., 56.

8 See ibid., 56–57.

associated with the *prisca theologia*, such as Hermetism, Gnosticism, Neoplatonism and the Kabbalah, formed the bedrock of what is now studied as Western esotericism.[9]

In 1540, the Vatican librarian Agostino Steuco published *De perenni philosophia*. Wouter Hanegraaff notes that it was written in the wake of the Reformation and appeared in the run-up to the Council of Trent, in which Catholic theologians attempted to formulate a response to Luther's attack on the paganism (among other things) of the Catholic Church.[10] In contrast to Ficino, Steuco did not believe that the truth had been lost and needed to be recovered from pagan texts, nor did it require complex exegetical work, derived from the Kabbalah, in order to prise it from the Old and New Testaments (in the manner of Pico and the Christian Kabbalists): the truth was perennial and had been handed down from God to Adam and was perfectly embodied in the Catholic Church.[11] While the Protestants were intent on exposing the corrupt pagan core of Catholicism, Steuco "sought to reveal Roman Catholic doctrine as the hidden core of paganism".[12]

Charles Schmitt writes that for Steuco the "end of philosophy is knowledge of God and union with Him",[13] which on the face of it jibes well with Huxley's Perennial Philosophy that "places man's final end in the knowledge" of the godhead.[14] But for Huxley, this knowledge of the godhead was salvational and could only be obtained by saints and sages through the experience of mystical union, whereas for Steuco, the wisdom of the *philosophia perennis* was ultimately Catholic, and so presumably salvation was not contingent on mystical experience but could be obtained through the usual channels (piety, the sacraments, grace and so forth), and "union" with God would take place in heaven, rather than on earth prior to one's death. Moreover, Huxley had not heard of Steuco and believed that the phrase *philosophia perennis* had been coined by Gottfried Leibniz (1646–1716).[15] On the one hand, Leibniz had read Steuco and

9 See ibid., 53.

10 See ibid., 9, 70.

11 Schmitt affirms that the truth had been "transmitted to the later generations from Adam", rather than Moses (see Schmitt, "Perennial Philosophy", 518). Loemker asserts that for Steuco the perennial philosophy was the "originally revealed absolute truth made available to man before his fall, completely forgotten in that lapse, and only gradually regained in fragmentary form in the subsequent history of human thought". Leroy E. Loemker, "Perennial Philosophy", in *Dictionary of the History of Ideas: Studies of Selected Pivotal Ideas*, ed. Philip P. Wiener, 5 vols (New York: Charles Scribners, 1973), 3: 457.

12 Hanegraaff, *Esotericism and the Academy*, 73.

13 Schmitt, "Perennial Philosophy", 519.

14 Huxley, *Perennial Philosophy*, vii.

15 See ibid.

his "philosophy of harmony" had much in common with the *philosophia perennis*, and thus Leibniz can be seen, Schmitt argues, as "an eminent defender of the tradition";[16] on the other hand, Leibniz's usage of the term *philosophia perennis* made no mention of Steuco (who was largely forgotten after the middle of the eighteenth century), and consequently many people imagined that Leibniz had coined the term and it lost the specificity of its original meaning.[17] And in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries the more general notion of a perennial philosophy was adopted by the adherents of widely different worldviews, including Platonism, positivism and Catholicism, among many others.[18] Finally, while the mystical texts Huxley anthologised in *The Perennial Philosophy* are presented as embodying the *philosophia perennis*, there is no suggestion that Rumi or Laozi or St John of the Cross were conscious of this tradition, any more than James Joyce or Virginia Woolf were aware of themselves as participating in the modernist movement.[19]

H.P. Blavatsky derived the name Theosophy from the Eclectic Theosophical system of the third-century Neoplatonic philosopher Ammonius Saccas, whose ambition was to "reconcile all religions, sects, and nations under a common system of ethics, based on eternal verities".[20] In antiquity, Blavatsky affirms, there was a "Wisdom-Religion" that sounds akin to the *prisca theologia* (the phrase had been forgotten in Blavatsky's time and was introduced into academic discourse by D.P. Walker in 1954).[21] Unlike the Christian Pico, who presented the Hebrew Moses as anterior to the Egyptian Hermes, thereby suggesting that Egyptian religion and Greek philosophy were the product of the kabbalistic wisdom transmitted from Jehovah to Moses, Blavatsky claimed that Hermes was anterior to Moses, and represented Moses as a priest of Osiris.[22] But for Blavatsky the chronology was not important, since both the Kabbalah

16 Schmitt, "Perennial Philosophy", 530–531.

17 See Wouter J. Hanegraaff, "Tradition", in *Dictionary of Gnosis and Western Esotericism*, 1130. Leibniz refers to "*perennis quaedam philosophia*" in a letter to Remond de Montmort in August 1714. Hanegraaff argues, however, that Schmitt is wrong in supposing that this reference to "a kind of perennial philosophy" is an allusion to Steuco's *philosophia perennis* (see Hanegraaff, *Esotericism and the Academy*, 130n183).

18 See Schmitt, "Perennial Philosophy", 505.

19 The term "modernist" was first used by Robert Graves and Laura Riding in their *A Survey of Modernist Poetry* (1927), but was not widely adopted in academic circles until the 1960s.

20 H.P. Blavatsky, *The Key to Theosophy* (London: Theosophical Publishing Company, 1889), 3.

21 In his article "*Prisca Theologia* in France" – see Hanegraaff, *Esotericism and the Academy*, 7n7.

22 See H.P. Blavatsky, *Isis Unveiled: A Master Key to the Mysteries of Ancient and Modern Science and Theology*, 2 vols (New York: J.W. Bouton, 1877), 1: 33n, and 1: 555–556.

and Hermetism derived from the primordial Secret Doctrine. She also included Brahmins and the Buddha among the exponents of the ancient wisdom religion, whose "identical doctrines [were] taught to the Initiates during the mysteries, an institution once universally diffused".[23] It is unclear from this, however, whether the ancient wisdom was transmitted orally or was received in an ecstatic or mystical manner.[24] Blavatsky affirms that "Ancient Theosophists claimed, and so do the modern, that the infinite cannot be known by the finite – *i.e.,* sensed by the finite Self – but that the divine essence could be communicated to the higher Spiritual Self in a state of ecstasy".[25] She quotes Plotinus' definition of ecstasy as "the liberation of the mind from its finite consciousness, becoming one and identified with the infinite", and conflates this with the *samadhi* of *pātañjali yoga*.[26] But in Theosophy there's no emphasis on meditation or the attainment of gnosis or *samadhi* for the purpose of revelation or salvation. In *The Secret Doctrine* (1888), Blavatsky states that she is not a "revealer of mystic lore" and maintains that the Theosophical "truths" therein can mostly be "found scattered throughout hundreds and thousands of Sanskrit *MSS";* the rest derive from the *Book of Dzyan,* written in the occult language of Senzar.[27] In addition, Blavatsky derived information from the Masters, who may be thought of as initiates or adepts, through a form of clairvoyance.[28]

Since, for Blavatsky, the Secret Doctrine was the common source for all the world's religions and religious philosophies, it followed that her Theosophical terms and concepts were often found in other religions, or were conflated with terms and concepts from other religions. For example, she likens the Absolute (the Theosophical godhead) with the "Parabrahman of the Vedantins".[29] According to Blavatsky, the Absolute is eternal and alternates between immense periods of activity and passivity (which she denotes with the Sanskrit terms *manvantaras* and *pralayas*), and this teaching, she affirms, can be found in Buddhism, Hinduism (the days and nights of Brahma) and the Kabbalah.[30]

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23 Blavatsky, *Key to Theosophy*, 4.

24 During the Eleusinian Mysteries, for example, the initiates were subject to ineffable (and possibly psychotropic) visions. See Carl A.P. Ruck, *Road to Eleusis: Unveiling the Secret of the Mysteries* (Berkeley: North Atlantic Books, 2008), 12–13.

25 Blavatsky, *Key to Theosophy*, 10.

26 Ibid.

27 H.P. Blavatsky, *The Secret Doctrine: The Synthesis of Science, Religion, and Philosophy*, 2 vols (London: Theosophical Publishing House, 1921), 1: xx, 6.

28 See Jake Poller, "'Under a glamour': Charles Leadbeater, Annie Besant and Neo-Theosophy", in *The Occult Imagination in Britain, 1875–1947*, ed. Christine Ferguson and Andrew Radford (Abingdon: Routledge, 2018), 84.

29 Blavatsky, *Secret Doctrine*, 1: 44.

30 See ibid., 33.

At the start of each new *manvantara*, the Absolute produces an unmanifested logos, which Blavatsky likens to the "'First Cause', the 'Unconscious' of European Pantheists".[31] This gives rise to a manifested logos, which Blavatsky likens to the *puruṣa* and *prakṛti* of *pātañjali yoga*. From this there issues a third logos, the world soul or *anima mundi*, which Blavatsky equates with the over-soul of Emerson.[32] The world soul contains the archetypes for the cosmos, which is created by a collective demiurge, the seven Dhyan Chohans, which Blavatsky compares to Christian archangels and seraphs, the "Rishi-Prajapati of the Hindus, the Elohim or Sons of God of the Jews".[33] Similar types of emanationist cosmology can be found in Neoplatonism, Hermetism, Kabbalah, etc.

Blavatsky also performs esoteric readings of myths and sacred texts to reveal the Secret Doctrine beneath the palimpsest of the surface or exoteric meaning. In order to give examples of this procedure, I shall have to dilate on some aspects of Blavatsky's evolutionary cosmology. In Theosophy, all the entities of the universe contain a divine spark from the world soul called the monad. Each *manvantara* comprises seven rounds during which the monad manifests in all the forms of the phenomenal world, from mineral to plant, human being and animal. In each round, the monad must pass through seven root races (which are further subdivided into seven sub-root races). The monad in its current human manifestation is in the fifth root race of the fourth round. The first three rounds lasted some three hundred million years. During this time, the monad was manifested in stones, plants and animals. Not until the third (Lemurian) root race of the fourth round (approximately eighteen million years ago) did the monad begin to incarnate in anything resembling a human form. One of the early incarnations of the Lemurian root race was hermaphrodite; these egg-born beings were the source, Blavatsky argues, for both the myth of Leda and the story told by Aristophanes about the origin of man in the *Symposium*.[34] In the *Pymander* (originally attributed to Hermes Trismegistus), Blavatsky notes, all the animal kingdom, including humans, were said to be hermaphrodite.[35] Furthermore, she maintains that there was a hermaphrodite

31 Ibid., 44.

32 See ibid., 38–39, 44, 79.

33 Ibid., 44.

34 "Our nature of old was not the same as it is now. It was *androgynous*, the form and name partaking of, and being common to both the male and female.... Their bodies were round, and the manner of their running circular. They were terrible in force and strength and had prodigious ambition. Hence Zeus divided each of them into two, making them weaker; Apollo, under his direction, closed up the skin". Plato quoted in Blavatsky, *Secret Doctrine*, 2: 142 (Blavatsky's italics).

35 See ibid., 101.

Adam in the Garden of Eden, created by the Elohim (i.e. the lesser gods, rather than Jehovah, who symbolise the Dhyan Chohans).[36] The hermaphrodite Lemurians lacked *manas* (soul or mind, one of the seven principles of humans), and only acquired this when a third of the Dhyan Chohans incarnated in the Lemurians. This development can be esoterically glimpsed, Blavatsky maintains, in the biblical story of the fall of Lucifer and his rebellious angels from heaven. For Blavatsky, Lucifer is the "Harbinger of Light", who invested Adam with divine knowledge by tempting him to eat from the tree of good and evil.[37] In this manner, then, all religions, myths and religious philosophy can be traced back to the Secret Doctrine; and the exoteric differences between Hinduism and Buddhism, Islam and Christianity, Judaism and Neoplatonism can be resolved when regarded in the proper esoteric light.[38]

As noted in the introduction, the catch-all term "perennialism" can be used, in different contexts, to refer to the *prisca theologia* of Ficino and Pico, the *philosophia perennis* of Steuco, Huxley's Perennial Philosophy and Traditionalism. In order to avoid confusion, I shall refer to Huxley's version of perennialism as the Perennial Philosophy.

Traditionalism is associated with René Guénon, Julius Evola, Ananda Coomaraswamy, Frithjof Schuon, Huston Smith and others. Insofar as the Tradition is primordial and metaphysical, "a set of universal principles that underpin all modern religions and systems of thought",[39] it sounds a lot like the Secret Doctrine. Like Theosophists, Traditionalists emphasise the importance of the esoteric current in normative religions, and claim that the Tradition can be partially recovered through the hermeneutics of a Traditionalist elite, who have undergone some form of initiation.[40] Guénon was an early member of the French Theosophical Society, who, like Blavatsky and H.S. Olcott, embraced the perennial philosophy of the Vedas, but he later renounced Theosophy and regarded it as a corruption of the Tradition.[41] Drawing on the work of Antoine Faivre, Hanegraaff lists the tenets of Traditionalism thus:

36 See ibid., 142.

37 See ibid., 254.

38 For this latter point, see Christopher Partridge, "Lost Horizon: H.P. Blavatsky and Theosophical Orientalism", in *Handbook of the Theosophical Current*, ed. Olav Hammer and Mikael Rothstein (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 327.

39 Peter King, "René Guénon and Traditionalism", in *The Occult World*, ed. Christopher Partridge (Abingdon: Routledge, 2015), 310.

40 See ibid., 311.

41 See Mark Sedgwick, *Against the Modern World: Traditionalism and the Secret Intellectual History of the Twentieth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 24, 42.

(1) There exists a primordial Tradition of non-human origin – humanity has not invented but received it – which has progressively gotten lost, and of which the various historical traditions and metaphysics are the *membra disjecta*. [...]
(2) Modern Western culture, science and civilization is inherently incompatible with Tradition; never before has humanity been alienated from the latter as seriously as today.
(3) The Tradition may be recovered, partially at least, by focusing on the common denominators of the various religious and metaphysical traditions. Such research cannot be neutral but requires the seeker to embrace the fundamental Traditional values and perspectives, and preferably to have undergone "initiation".[42]

It should be clear from the above, that Huxley's conception of the Perennial Philosophy is incompatible with Traditionalism. Guénon's emphasis on initiation, which in practice meant either Sufism or Freemasonry, as a means to esoteric knowledge,[43] goes against the grain of Huxley's Perennial Philosophy, which was at least potentially accessible to the exoteric majority through the writings of mystics. Huxley did not advocate a renunciation of science and modern civilisation, he consistently argued that humankind must make the "best of both worlds", that of science and religion, quantum physics and mysticism, and conscientiously kept abreast of scientific developments (see Chapter 2). The corollary of Traditionalism, as Umberto Eco points out, is that "*there can be no advancement of learning*", since the "truth has already been announced once and for all, and all we can do is continue interpreting its obscure message".[44] This idea would have been anathema to Huxley, who cherished the Latin motto *aun aprendo* (I am still learning), and whose intellectual curiosity was unquenchable.[45]

Furthermore, scholars of Traditionalism tend to be hostile to Huxley. Harry Oldmeadow objects that Huxley is in thrall to the "scientistic ideology of the modern West",[46] for instance correlating the psychologist William Sheldon's personality types with the three paths of yoga in the *Bhagavad Gita*.[47] For

42 Hanegraaff, "Tradition", 1132.
43 See Sedgwick, *Against the Modern World*, 80 and King, "René Guénon and Traditionalism", 311.
44 Umberto Eco, "Ur-Fascism", in *Five Moral Pieces,* trans. Alastair McEwan (London: Secker & Warburg, 2001), 78–79. Eco's italics.
45 See Murray, *Aldous Huxley*, 387.
46 Harry Oldmeadow, *Journeys East: Twentieth Century Western Encounters with Eastern Traditions* (Indiana: World Wisdom, 2004), 81.
47 See also Kenneth Oldmeadow, *Traditionalism: Religion in the Light of the Perennial Philosophy* (Colombo: Sri Lanka Institute of Traditional Studies, 2000), 155. Both *Journeys*

Traditionalists, science is derided since it is wholly concerned with the phenomenal world and does not recognise a noumenal realm, whence the Platonic or Traditional truth resides. In addition to Huxley's unsavoury attachment to science, Oldmeadow maintains that his fixation with morality, his guilt-ridden attitude to sex and his supposedly contradictory representation of spirit and matter as at times wholly incommensurable and at others as a Blakean amalgam ("Man has no Body distinct from his Soul"),[48] renders his work "quite incompatible with traditionalism".[49] It should be noted that Oldmeadow's critique of Huxley derives from another Traditionalist scholar, Charles le Gai Eaton, who devotes a chapter of his 1949 book *The Richest Vein* to Huxley's work, and thus does not take into account the change in Huxley's spiritual allegiance from neo-Advaita to Tantra in the mid-50s (this will be examined in Chapter 5), which resolved many of the issues above that seem to vex both Eaton and Oldmeadow.[50]

Neo-Vedanta: The Brahmo Samaj, Sri Ramakrishna (1836–1886) and Swami Vivekananda (1863–1902)

Before the nineteenth century in India there was no single unified world religion known as Hinduism, rather there were six philosophies or *darshanas*: Mimamsa, Vaisheshika, Nyaya, Yoga, Samkhya and Vedanta.[51] The latter comprised three main schools: Advaita (nondual) Vedanta associated with Shankara; the Vishishta Advaita (qualified nondualism) associated with Ramanuja; and the Dvaita (dual) Vedanta associated with Madhva.[52] There were also a number of atheist or *nastika* philosophies to choose from, such as Buddhism, Jainism and Ajivika. The word "Hindoo" originally denoted indigenous people from around the Indus River, an area the Persians referred to as Hindustan, and the word did not develop a precise religious connotation until the

East and *Traditionalism* are written by the same author, who uses both his Christian name (Kenneth) and his nickname (Harry) for his publications.

48 From *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, quoted by Huxley in "Pascal", in *CE* 2: 391.

49 Oldmeadow, *Traditionalism*, 160.

50 See Gai Eaton, *The Richest Vein: Eastern Tradition and Modern Thought* (London: Faber, 1949), 166–182.

51 This is a contentious point. Some scholars argue that these philosophies did in fact constitute an over-arching tradition that would later be termed Hinduism. See J.E. Llewellyn, ed., *Defining Hinduism: A Reader* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2005).

52 See Wendy Doniger, *The Hindus: An Alternative History* (New York: Penguin, 2009), 504–505 and Jeffery D. Long, "Universalism in Hinduism", *Religion Compass* 5/6 (2011): 216.

nineteenth century.[53] "Hinduism", then, was a largely Western Orientalist nineteenth-century construct that misleadingly connoted a homogenous religion to which all Hindus subscribed. Interestingly, the earliest usage of "Hindooism" noted by Dermot Killingley comes from the Bengali Brahmin Rammohun Roy, the founder of what became known as the Brahmo Samaj (Society of Brahman) in 1828, and Roy has been feted by scholars as "the father of modern India".[54] Although Roy received an Indian education, he worked closely with the British, collaborated with the Christian missionary William Carey, translated parts of the New Testament into Bengali under the aegis of Carey's Serampore mission, and with the Rev. W. Adam founded the Calcutta Unitarian Society in 1821.[55] Roy's Brahmo Samaj, while based on the *Upanishads* and the Vedas, has been termed neo-Vedanta because of his Western, Christian and in particular Unitarian interpretation of Vedanta.[56] The Brahmo Samaj was strictly monotheistic and rejected the polytheism associated with the Puranas (medieval religious texts concerned with history, folklore and mythology), as well as the idolatry and ritualism they inspired. Admittedly, the *Upanishads* could be read as monotheistic, and Roy's monotheism was possibly partly influenced by his study of Islam, but Elizabeth De Michelis argues that his emphasis on social reform and his liberal rational approach to religion was indebted to Unitarianism.[57] Roy campaigned against illiteracy, child marriage, the caste system and *sati* (the practice of immolating Brahmin widows), but this social activism went against the grain of the otherworldly Advaita Vedanta, which emphasised liberation from the world (*moksha*). For the enlightened Advaitin, the phenomenal world of apparent diversity is the undifferentiated *brahman*, and social reform thus seems superfluous (since *brahman* does not require human help). Ram Dass records walking through scenes of abject poverty and squalor in Bangladesh, and his guru saying: "Can you see how perfect it is?"[58]

Roy's successors at the Brahmo Samaj took the movement even further away from orthodox Vedanta. De Michelis notes that Debendranath Tagore "distanced himself" from the doctrines of karma and reincarnation and denied

53 See Richard King, *Orientalism and Religion: Post-Colonial Theory, India and "The Mystic East"* (London: Routledge, 1999), 98–99.

54 See King, *Orientalism and Religion,* 100.

55 See Elizabeth De Michelis, *A History of Modern Yoga: Patañjali and Western Esotericism* (London: Continuum, 2008), 52–53 and Doniger, *The Hindus*, 615–616.

56 See De Michelis, *Modern Yoga*, 46 and Long, "Universalism in Hinduism", 218.

57 See De Michelis, *Modern Yoga*, 45, 54–55.

58 Quoted in Richard H. Jones, *Philosophy of Mysticism: Raids on the Ineffable* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2016), 322.

the infallibility of the Vedas.[59] In 1866, there was a schism in the Brahmo Samaj, with Tagore objecting to the Christianising influence of Keshub Chandra Sen. After meeting Ramakrishna Paramahamsa (the patron sage of the future Vedanta Societies of America and Europe), Sen attempted to establish a universal religion and formed the Church of the New Dispensation (*Nava Vidhan*) to this end.[60] Sen was also inspired by the American Transcendentalism of Ralph Waldo Emerson, who advocated the study of comparative religion in order to create a "higher religious synthesis".[61] Sen had been introduced to Emerson by the Unitarian missionary Charles Dall; conversely, the Transcendentalists were great admirers of Hinduism and had been influenced by Roy's neo-Vedanta.[62]

Narendranath Datta (the future Swami Vivekananda) was actively involved in both Sen's splinter group the Brahmo Samaj of India and the New Dispensation, and regarded Sen as a role model. It was only after Sen's death in 1884 that he drew close to Ramakrishna, who died just two years later. Vivekananda made Ramakrishna the spiritual father of the Ramakrishna Order, which he founded in 1897, and Ramakrishna's teachings were represented as traditional Advaita Vedanta. But the neo-Advaita propounded by Vivekananda was in fact more indebted to Sen and the Brahmo Samaj, as well as the Western influences Vivekananda was exposed to when he was one of the Hindu delegates at the 1893 World Parliament of Religions in Chicago. In the latter, representatives of the Theosophical Society and the Brahmo Samaj also appeared with Vivekananda under the aegis of Hinduism,[63] which is indicative of the lazy way in which disparate "Eastern" religions, movements and traditions were regarded as a homogenous whole.

Richard King notes that British Orientalists in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries identified Hinduism with Vedanta (and conflated Advaita Vedanta with Vedanta) partly as a result of the Judaeo-Christian emphasis on scripture, and thus they valorised the *Bhagavad Gita* and the *Upanishads* over the polytheistic devotional worship that was practised by the masses in the temples of India.[64] For instance, Charles Wilkins, the first translator of the *Gita* into English, seized on the doctrine of a unified godhead as a bulwark against polytheism and idolatry, and the *Gita* was represented among the Bengali intelligentsia as "the Hindu version of the Bible".[65] Similarly, the *Upanishads*

59 See De Michelis, *Modern Yoga*, 45, 58.
60 See ibid., 51, 78.
61 See ibid., 81.
62 See ibid., 81, 55.
63 See ibid., 112.
64 See King, *Orientalism and Religion*, 122–130.
65 Ibid., 120–121.

propounded a monotheistic godhead (*brahman*), and was used as a bridge for "inter-faith dialogue" between Christians and Hindus.[66] Roy notes that the British were eager to "palliate and soften the features of Hindu idolatry", and liked to imagine that the deities the Hindus worshipped were regarded as avatars or representatives of *brahman*, but in reality, he laments, Hindus "firmly believe in the real existence of innumerable gods and goddesses, who possess [...] full and independent power; and to propitiate them, and not the true God, are temples erected and ceremonies performed".[67] Hindu reformers like Roy were keen to "prove to [his] European friends that the superstitious practices which deform the Hindoo religion have nothing to do" with Vedanta,[68] thereby reinforcing the erroneous assumption on the part of the British that the Vedas, and especially the *Upanishads*, represented the true essence of Hinduism.

One of Vivekananda's primary goals in coming to Chicago was to raise funds to alleviate poverty in India,[69] and both Vivekananda's social activism and his promotion of Hinduism (or rather neo-Advaita) as a universal religion were regarded as being part and parcel of Ramakrishna's teaching. However, as Jeffrey Kripal has shown, Ramakrishna was highly suspicious of social activism and his Hindu inclusivism (examined below) has been misrepresented as universalism. In an episode from *The Nectar of Sri Ramakrishna's Words*, Ramakrishna upbraids an interlocutor for the arrogance and vanity that underlie his charitable instincts. "Compassion belongs to God alone", writes Kripal, glossing Ramakrishna's position, "and everything that happens happens because of the 'will of Rāma'; it is thus pointless to try to change anything".[70] Moreover, there "can be no such thing as 'helping others' ... or working for 'the welfare of others' ... because, metaphysically speaking, *there is no other*".[71] In the monistic philosophy of Advaita Vedanta, there is no self or other, there is only *brahman*. Furthermore, Kripal argues that Ramakrishna's teachings conform

66 See ibid., 122.

67 Rammohun Roy, introduction to *Translation of Several Principal Books, Passages, and Texts, of the Veds, and of Some Controversial Works of Brahmunical Theology* (London: Parbury, Allen, 1832), 4–5.

68 Ibid., 4.

69 See Gwilym Beckerlegge, "The Early Spread of Vedanta Societies: An Example of 'Imported Localism'", *Numen: International Review for the History of Religions* 51, no. 3 (2004): 298 and De Michelis, *Modern Yoga*, 109.

70 Jeffrey J. Kripal, "Seeing Inside and Outside the Goddess: The Mystical and the Ethical in the Teachings of Ramakrishna and Vivekananda", in *Crossing Boundaries: Essays on the Ethical Status of Mysticism*, ed. G. William Barnard and Jeffrey J. Kripal (New York: Seven Bridges Press, 2002), 246.

71 Ibid., italics in original.

more closely to the Bengali Shakta (goddess worship) Tantra tradition than to Advaita Vedanta:

> there is little, if any, historical precedent in India for grounding either a universal ecumenism like Ramakrishna's or a social consciousness like Vivekananda's in classical Advaita Vedanta; quite the contrary, this particular philosophical tradition has historically been quite polemical toward competing religious visions and has been fundamentally ascetic in its attitude toward the social world, which it generally seeks to renounce along Indian lines rather than reform along Western lines.[72]

Ramakrishna was the priest at the Kali temple at Dakshineshwar, near Calcutta, and he worshipped Kali all his life, danced with her in visions, perceived her statue as alive, held its hands and slept next to it at night.[73] The following quotation from Ramakrishna is often cited as evidence of his universalism: "There are as many paths as there are opinions. All religions are true, just as the Kali Temple can be reached by different paths".[74] Kripal argues that for Ramakrishna, however, all religions were true insofar as they led to Kali.[75] Vivekananda and the neo-Advaita devotees of the Ramakrishna Mission tried to gloze over Ramakrishna's Kali worship by maintaining that his Śaktism was but a passing phase, or that for Ramakrishna Kali was but a personification of *brahman* and that Vedanta was paramount.[76] But as Kripal points out, Ramakrishna's response to Vivekananda's "Sanskrit hymns and Vedanta talk was emphatic: 'It's all so boring!'"[77] In the Tantric universe, Śiva is the transcendent godhead, and Śakti or Kali, his divine consort, is the immanent godhead in the world that Śiva projects out of a spirit of playfulness (*lila*).[78] While in Advaita Vedanta, *brahman* is also both transcendent and immanent, the world is perceived as *maya*, an illusion to be rejected. Thus where Ramakrishna

72 Jeffrey J. Kripal, *The Serpent's Gift: Gnostic Reflections on the Study of Religion* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 102.

73 See June McDaniel, *Offering Flowers, Feeding Skulls: Popular Goddess Worship in West Bengal* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 189.

74 Quoted in Kripal, *Serpent's Gift*, 103.

75 See ibid., 103–104 and McDaniel, *Offering Flowers,* 13.

76 See McDaniel, *Offering Flowers,* 189–190.

77 Jeffrey J. Kripal, *Kali's Child: The Mystical and the Erotic in the Life and Teachings of Ramakrishna* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 25.

78 See for example Hugh B. Urban, "Tantra, American Style: From the Path of Power to the Yoga of Sex", in *Transformations and Transfer of Tantra in Asia and Beyond*, ed. István Keul (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2012), 461–462.

regarded Kali *qua* world as a "mansion of fun", Vivekananda and his devotees were dour renunciates.[79]

Ramakrishna is also reputed to have reached enlightenment in several different religious traditions, but he only practised Christianity and Islam for a matter of days and before embarking on each new religious path he prayed to Kali for permission and continued to worship her while pursuing this new path.[80] Kripal also suggests that Ramakrishna's universalism was inspired by Roy's Brahmo Samaj, and that far from Ramakrishna inspiring Sen's quest for a universal religion, Ramakrishna encouraged Sen to return to more traditional Hindu forms of worship.[81] Certainly, it is true that under Ramakrishna's influence Sen renounced his Brahmo condemnation of idolatry and polytheism, and reverted to a more devotional (*bhakti*) style of worship.[82] If for Ramakrishna, then, all religions led to Kali, for his disciple Vivekananda, all religions led to the monistic *brahman* of neo-Advaita.

In his address to the World Parliament of Religions, Vivekananda states that in India numerous sects appeared that shook "the religion of the Vedas [i.e. Vedanta] to its very foundations", but that these sects have now been reassimilated into the "mother faith", i.e. neo-Advaita, which he represents as "Hinduism".[83] In keeping with this, he affirms that "there is no polytheism in India": when Indians "pray" before the image of a deity in a temple, it is but a symbol of God (he uses Christian terms to appeal to his American audience rather than Vedantic terms). Likewise, the identity of *atman* and *brahman* is presented in Christian terms: "the best proof a Hindu sage gives about the soul, about God, is: 'I have seen the soul; I have seen God'" and "this reaching God, seeing God, becoming perfect even as the Father in Heaven is perfect, constitutes the religion of the Hindus".[84] Hinduism, he contends, is a universal religion in that it regards all religions as means whereby diverse human beings in different circumstances can reach the "same goal", i.e. God "realisation". The contradictions between religions are only apparent, he argues, the result of the "same truth adapting itself to the varying circumstances of different natures". But how to reconcile Hinduism with its emphasis on God realisation with Buddhism, which he characterises as agnostic? While Buddhism does not

79 See Kripal, *Kali's Child*, 26–27.

80 See McDaniel, *Offering Flowers,* 189–190 and Kripal, *Serpent's Gift*, 103.

81 See Kripal, *Serpent's Gift*, 104–105.

82 See Gauri Shankar Bhatt, "Brahmo Samaj, Arja Samaj, and the Church-Sect Typology", *Review of Religious Research* 10, no. 1 (1968): 25.

83 Swami Vivekananda, "Paper on Hinduism", in *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, vol. 1, accessed February 1, 2018, http://advaitaashrama.org/cw/content.php.

84 Ibid.

acknowledge a creator God, "the whole force of their religion", Vivekananda asserts, is to "evolve a God out of man". One could perhaps argue that Buddhists believe that good karma will lead to rebirth as a god, but this is not the goal of Buddhism, which is to attain *nirvana* and thereby to escape *samsara* (rebirth), and this does not involve becoming "one with Brahman" nor enjoying "bliss with God". Nonetheless, Vivekananda attempts to arrogate Buddhism and Jainism into "Hinduism" with the following, essentially meaningless, soundbite: "They [i.e. Buddhists and Jains] have not seen the Father, but they have seen the Son. And he that hath seen the Son hath seen the Father also".[85] Likewise, in a later speech, Vivekananda skips over the fundamental difference between the monism of neo-Advaita and the dualism inherent in several Hindu traditions, such as Samkhya, *pātañjali yoga* and Dvaita Vedanta: "The different sectarian systems of India all radiate from one central idea of unity or dualism. They are all under Vedanta, all interpreted by it. Their final essence is the teaching of unity".[86] To a neo-Advaitin like Vivekananda this makes perfect sense, but to dualists this is hardly a satisfactory explanation.

Vivekananda, then, presents "Hinduism" (i.e. neo-Advaita) as the universal religion, noting its history of religious toleration (unlike the Christians with their inquisitions); furthermore, Hinduism does not attempt to inculcate fixed doctrines and dogmas, nor does it deny salvation to those who adhere to other religions (unlike, implicitly, Judaism, Christianity and Islam). Despite Vivekananda's universalist rhetoric, King argues that his neo-Hinduism is in fact inclusivist, in that it accepts that other religions contain a kernel of truth, but insists that this truth has been hidden or distorted by dogma, and can only be properly perceived in Advaita Vedanta.[87] But in the minds of Vivekananda's converts, his neo-Advaita was synonymous with Hinduism, and Hinduism was a universal religion. Christopher Isherwood, in the introduction to *Vedanta for the Western World* (1948), an anthology of articles first published in the journal of the Vedanta Society of Southern California, represents "Vedanta" as "fundamentally monistic", thereby conflating Advaita Vedanta with Vedanta.[88] Not only, he affirms, is "Vedanta Philosophy" the common core of the multifarious Hindu sects but it is an embodiment of the "Philosophia Perennis".[89] He maintains that Vedanta can be reduced to three tenets: "First, that Man's real nature is divine. Second, that the aim of human life is to realize this divine

85 Ibid.

86 Vivekananda, quoted in King, *Orientalism and Religion*, 137.

87 See ibid., 140.

88 Christopher Isherwood, introduction to *Vedanta for the Western World* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1949), 9.

89 Ibid., 1.

nature. Third, that all religions are essentially in agreement".[90] He writes that Buddha and Christ were avatars of *brahman*, thereby absorbing Buddhism and Christianity into the broad church of neo-Vedanta, which also recognises Allah.[91] Furthermore, he gives an emic account of Ramakrishna, in which he acknowledges Ramakrishna's devotion to Kali, but asserts that the Vedantic monk Totapuri was able to make Ramakrishna realise that Kali was but an avatar of the impersonal *brahman*,[92] whereas Kripal asserts that in fact Totapuri had a vision of Kali and was converted to Tantra, in which the world is not an illusion but the immanent Śakti or Kali.[93] Significantly, Isherwood's account has Tantric overtones: he writes that following Totapuri's intervention, Ramakrishna was now aware of the monistic *brahman* but was able to perceive "in all matter and circumstance the *play* of the divine Power".[94] In Tantra, as noted above, the phenomenal world is the play (*lila*) of Śiva in the form of Śakti, whereas for Vedantins it is an illusion (*maya*) that must be renounced. Isherwood claims that Ramakrishna explored all the different paths to god, and compares him with Shakespeare and Tolstoy, arguing that for both artistic and spiritual greatness universality is the key.[95] He represents Vivekananda as "the bearer of [Ramakrishna's] message to the world".[96] For Isherwood, then, and the Vedanta Societies of America, Ramakrishna's teachings were identified with Advaita Vedanta and this was held to be the basis of all Hindu sects as well as all the world religions.

Varieties of Perennialism: William James (1842–1910), Rudolf Otto (1869–1937), W.T. Stace (1886–1967)

Huxley was but one of several authors in the twentieth century to propound a version of perennialism. In order to situate his Perennial Philosophy, there follows a brief examination of the typologies of mysticism advanced by some notable writers that preceded him, and one who closely followed in his train.

In *Varieties of Religious Experience* (1902), William James advanced a qualified form of perennialism. The scientific side of Huxley was attracted by James' radical empiricism. James not only admitted religious experience to

90 Ibid.
91 See ibid., 9–10.
92 See ibid., 16–17.
93 See Kripal, *Kali's Child*, 152–153. See also McDaniel, *Offering Flowers*, 189.
94 Isherwood, introduction to *Vedanta for the Western World*, 17. My italics.
95 See ibid., 16.
96 Ibid., 21.

psychological and philosophical analysis, he championed F.W.H. Myers' notion of the subliminal mind to bridge the gap between the sacred and the secular, and, as we saw in the previous chapter, Myers' work would later exert a considerable influence on Huxley.[97] Moreover, James was an early exponent of the idea that drugs could induce altered states of consciousness that were at least comparable to mystical experience and made several experiments himself with nitrous oxide.[98] James describes the subliminal mind as the "fountainhead of much that feeds our religion" and notes that in mystics and saints the door to the subliminal mind "seems unusually wide open" and that "experiences making their entrance through that door have had emphatic influence in shaping religious history".[99] James' examples of mysticism closely focus on experience, rather than the teachings inspired by them, and are drawn from writers, poets and lay people as well as from recognised saints and sages. He proposes a fourfold typology to identify mystical experience: ineffability; a "noetic quality" associated with spiritual revelation or illumination; transience; and passivity.[100]

One of James' examples of mystical experience that exemplifies all four categories comes from the Canadian psychiatrist R.M. Bucke; his episode of what he termed "cosmic consciousness" took place while riding home in a hansom cab after an evening spent with friends reading the romantic poets:

> there came upon me a sense of exultation, of immense joyousness accompanied or immediately followed by an intellectual illumination impossible to describe. Among other things, I did not merely come to believe, but I saw that the universe is not composed of dead matter, but is, on the contrary, a living Presence; I became conscious in myself of eternal life. It was not a conviction that I would have eternal life, but a consciousness that I possessed eternal life then; I saw that all men are immortal; that the cosmic order is such that without any peradventure all things work together for the good of each and all; that the foundation principle of the world, of all the worlds, is what we call love, and that the happiness of each and all is in the long run absolutely certain. The vision lasted a few seconds and was gone; but the memory of it and the sense of

97 For more on James and Myers and the subliminal mind, see my introduction to *Altered Consciousness in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Jake Poller (Abingdon: Routledge, 2019), 4–6.

98 See William James, "Subjective Effects of Nitrous Oxide", in *Altered States of Consciousness: A Book of Readings*, ed. Charles T. Tart (London: John Wiley, 1969), 359–362.

99 William James, *Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature* (New York: Modern Library, 1929), 473.

100 See ibid., 371–372.

> the reality of what it taught has remained during the quarter of a century which has since elapsed.[101]

Bucke's experience, then, was passive (he describes his state prior to the episode as one of "passive enjoyment") and transient; the "intellectual illumination" (noetic quality) he experienced was ineffable. What seems to be ineffable is the precise mechanism by which he came to apprehend that human beings are immortal, that love is the "foundation principle of the world" and that the cosmos is alive. It is noteworthy that while James regards this noetic quality as being integral to mystical experience, later perennialists and scholars of mysticism, as we shall see, downplay this aspect. The knowledge received in mystical states, James affirms, is "intuitive", more akin to emotion, rather than discursive rational thought.[102] While Bucke's experience involved the apprehension of a divine or metaphysical immanence in the external world, for St Teresa, God transcends the world and only interacts with her soul. "In the orison of union", she writes,

> the soul is fully awake as regards God, but wholly asleep as regards things of this world and in respect of herself. During the short time the union lasts, she is as it were deprived of every feeling, and even if she would, she could not think of any single thing. Thus she needs to employ no artifice in order to arrest the use of her understanding: it remains so stricken with inactivity that she neither knows what she loves, nor in what manner she loves, nor what she wills. In short, she is utterly dead to the things of the world and lives solely in God.[103]

Despite this paralysis of the faculties, St Teresa elsewhere reports a noetic quality to her mystical experiences: "One day, being in orison [...] it was granted me to perceive in one instant how all things are seen and contained in God".[104]

After giving examples from a variety of traditions, James claims that the keynote of mystical experience is the communion or identity of the individual and the Absolute. There is, he affirms, an "everlasting and triumphant mystical tradition" that can be discerned in Hinduism, Neoplatonism, Sufism and Christian mysticism, an "eternal unanimity" that unites the mystics of these disparate

101 Quoted in ibid., 390–391.
102 See ibid., 397.
103 Quoted in ibid., 400.
104 Quoted in ibid., 402.

traditions.[105] On the other hand, James also acknowledges that the unanimity of "classic religious mysticism" can only be maintained by selective quotations, and that even within each tradition there are irreconcilable differences, such as the dualism of Samkhya and the monism of Advaita Vedanta, thereby tempering his earlier assertion of there being a transcendent perennialism.[106]

Another figure with significant perennialist leanings is the German theologian and scholar of comparative religion Rudolf Otto. In *Mysticism East and West* (1932), he sets out the similarities, as well as some of the differences, between Shankara's interpretation of Advaita Vedanta and the Christian mysticism of Meister Eckhart. For instance, just as for Shankara there is a personal god (Isvara) and an impersonal godhead (*brahman*), so for Eckhart there is the personal God of the trinity and an impersonal godhead or Ground. Since *brahman* is nondual (*advaita*) and distinctionless (*nirguna*), it can be described only in the negative (*neti neti*); likewise, Eckhart's godhead is ineffable and thus apophatic. For Shankara, only *brahman* is real, and the phenomenal world is *maya*, born of the misknowing (*avidya*) of the individual who fails to perceive that her *atman* is the same as *brahman*.[107] Similarly, for Eckhart, the godhead is pure Being and "what is other than Being is nothing"; just as the "Godhead is nameless and all naming is alien to Him, so the soul is also nameless" since "it is here the same as God"; but this unity of soul and godhead is obscured by our "creaturely nature" and the illusion of multiplicity.[108] Not only are the metaphysical speculations of Shankara and Eckhart strikingly similar, so, too, is the "their attitude to mystical experience".[109]

Otto presents a twofold typology of mysticism: the "inward way" and the "way of unity". The former is the experience of the One or the godhead as transcendent, achieved by turning away from the world and looking inwards to and through one's soul; while in the latter, the godhead or One is perceived in and behind the phenomenal many. Otto illustrates the inward way with the following passage from the *Sixth Ennead* of Plotinus:

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105 See ibid., 410. W.T. Stace speculates that the absence of Buddhism from James' list is due to the fact that, in Hinayana Buddhism (which, Stace argues, was the only form of Buddhism James would have been conversant with) there is no godhead or Absolute with which to identify – see *Mysticism and Philosophy* (London: Macmillan, 1961), 43.

106 See James, *Varieties of Religious Experience*, 416.

107 See Rudolf Otto, *Mysticism East and West: A Comparative Analysis of the Nature of Mysticism*, trans. B.L. Bracey and R.C. Payne (Wheaton: Theosophical Publishing House, 1987), 7–11.

108 Ibid., 13, 16.

109 Ibid., 3.

> Often when I awake from the slumber of the body and come to myself, and step out of the outward world in order to turn in upon myself, I behold a wonderful beauty. Then I believe unshakeably that I belong to a better world; most glorious life works strongly in me and I am become one with the Godhead. Transferred into this I have reached that vital energy and have raised myself above all intellectual things. When I then climb down from this rest in the lap of the Godhead to intellectual understanding I ask myself how there can possibly be a sinking back out of that condition.[110]

This experience is comparable to that of St Teresa quoted in James above. Otto divides the way of unity into three stages: (i) unity in the many; (ii) the One is immanent in the many; and (iii) the transcendent One.[111] Otto gives as example of the first an excerpt from Plotinus:

> He who has allowed the beauty of that world (seen in ideal unity) to penetrate his soul goes away no longer a mere observer. For the object perceived and the perceiving soul are no longer two things separated from one another, but the perceiving soul has (now) within itself the perceived object.[112]

The "ideal unity" (this is Otto's gloss) refers to the intelligible world of forms and ideas, which is a hypostasis or emanation of being between the Neoplatonic One and the phenomenal world. In the first stage, then, there is a collapse of ordinary subject-object dualism between perceiver and perceived, a unity of the many. In the second stage, the One is seen in the many; it is the "principle in which the many is grounded".[113] In the final stage, the many dissolves before the transcendent One, either being absorbed into the indivisible godhead of Eckhart, or dismissed as an illusory *maya* that obscures the real, *brahman*.[114] Both types of mysticism have a noetic quality: the One or godhead in the inward way and the unity of the many or One behind the many in the way of unity is known via a priori intuition that has nothing to do with conventional sense perception.[115]

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110 Quoted in ibid., 45.

111 See ibid., 48–57 and Paul Marshall, *Mystical Encounters with the Natural World: Experiences and Explanations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 143.

112 Otto, *Mysticism East and West*, 52 (Otto's comments in parentheses).

113 Ibid., 53.

114 See ibid., 55.

115 See ibid., 45 and Marshall, *Mystical Encounters*, 142.

While the inward way and way of unity are presented as different types of mysticism, Otto affirms that for Eckhart and Shankara "both ways converge",[116] the implication being that these mystics had both types of experience, but the difficulty is that neither Shankara nor Eckhart wrote directly of their own mystical experiences. According to Richard Jones, Otto was the first person to propose this twofold typology,[117] which is adopted by our next perennialist, the philosopher W.T. Stace.

In *Mysticism and Philosophy* (1960), Stace identifies a "universal core" of mystical experience that he asserts has obtained in all cultures, eras and religions. He builds on Otto's typology of the inward way and the way of unity. The latter is termed extrovertive experience or consciousness, since the mystic is gazing outward at the external world, and he identifies seven concomitant characteristics:

1. The Unifying Vision – all things are One
2. The more concrete apprehension of the One as an inner subjectivity, or life, in all things
3. Sense of objectivity or reality
4. Blessedness, peace, etc.
5. Feeling of the holy, sacred, or divine
6. Paradoxicality
7. Alleged by mystics to be ineffable.[118]

The first example he gives is also quoted in Otto and comes from Eckhart: "All that a man has here externally in multiplicity is intrinsically One. Here all blades of grass, wood, and stone, all things are One. This is the deepest depth".[119] Stace notes that not all his examples embody all seven characteristics, and that this is due in part to the fact that the mystics were not systematically recording their experience in a scientific manner, and that, in the case of Eckhart, many of his mystical pronouncements were made in sermons.[120] In the example above, the One is seen in the many (1); the many is imbued with or animated by the One

116 See Otto, *Mysticism East and West*, 56.

117 Jones, *Philosophy of Mysticism*, 6. Marshall claims that Underhill also employs this typology, but while it can at best be extrapolated from her five-stage "mystic way", it is not flagged up as it is in Otto (see *Mystical Encounters*, 137). Underhill is also often cited as a perennialist herself, but her influential book *Mysticism* (1911) is largely concerned with Christian mysticism, and despite examples from other mystical traditions, she does not advance a perennial philosophy. See Lawrence Cunningham, "Evelyn Underhill's *Mysticism*: An Appreciation", *Spiritus: A Journal of Christian Spirituality* 12, no. 1 (2012): 109.

118 Stace, *Mysticism*, 131–132.

119 Ibid., 63.

120 See ibid., 79–80.

(2); Eckhart believes that this perception of the One in the many is objectively real (3), and Stace adds that this is what James means by noetic quality; on the one hand, Eckhart perceives the objects of the phenomenal world (the blades of grass, wood, stone, etc.) as discrete, and on the other, he recognises that they are all One (6). Stace also notes that Eckhart never speaks of mystical experiences in the first person but that the authority he brings to bear on the subject has persuaded most scholars that he spoke from personal experience.[121]

Stace provides a contemporary example of an intellectual he refers to as N.M. who had a mystical experience on mescaline. Stace defends the authenticity of the experience by remarking that one of Jacob Boehme's extrovertive experiences was catalysed by staring at a "polished disc", which perhaps induced a state of hypnotism, but this should not impugn, he argues, the "value of Boehme's experience". N.M. was gazing out of his window at some dilapidated buildings with a rubbish-strewn wasteland in between, when the objects he perceived (a cat, a wasp, broken bottles) became transfigured, they "appeared exceedingly beautiful" and pulsed with an inner life that was identical to his own (2 and 4). While these objects were animated with the same life or existence, he did not lose the sense of them as discrete objects; there was what Stace terms an "identity in difference" (1 and 6). N.M. asserts that he was certain that he then perceived "things as they really were" (3). He describes the experience as "religious" and affirms that he "had seen God", not as an old man with a white beard but in the transfigured external world (5); he states that he has no sympathy with organised religion and regards his experience as incompatible with "any of its dogmas".[122] Neither of the examples exemplify ineffability, and Stace includes it with the caveat that while this is often reported by mystics it is not an invariable feature, and gives Bucke's extrovertive experience (quoted in James above) as an example of ineffability.[123]

Stace also provides seven characteristics of introvertive experience, with 3 to 7 being identical to the extrovertive list above, and the first two being: "1. The Unitary Consciousness; the One, the Void; pure consciousness; 2. Nonspatial, nontemporal".[124] Introvertive experience is achieved by turning away from the world in meditation or contemplation and ridding the mind of images, thoughts, emotions, volitions and mental content of any kind, at which point there emerges not unconsciousness or sleep but a state of "*pure* consciousness", devoid of all distinctions, an "undifferentiated unity" that mystics denote

121 See ibid., 64–65.
122 See ibid., 71–74.
123 See ibid., 78–79.
124 Ibid., 131.

by "the One" and "the Infinite".[125] One of Stace's examples is from the Mandukya Upanishad, which describes four states of consciousness, the first three being ordinary waking consciousness, dreaming and dreamless sleep:

> The Fourth, say the wise … is not the knowledge of the senses, nor is it relative knowledge, nor yet inferential knowledge. Beyond the senses, beyond the understanding, beyond all expression, is the Fourth. It is pure unitary consciousness wherein awareness of the world and of multiplicity is completely obliterated. It is ineffable peace. It is the Supreme Good. It is One without a second. It is the Self.[126]

Stace allows that this is doctrine ("say the wise") rather than an account of first-hand experience, but affirms that it is in accord with "descriptions of introvertive mysticism everywhere".[127] The example clearly fulfils the first characteristic; and since space and time are "principles of multiplicity" and multiplicity has been "obliterated", it also meets the second characteristic. Stace argues that this experience of "undifferentiated unity" need not be interpreted as religious,[128] but that naturally Hindu mystics conceive of the One as *brahman* or Kali, Buddhist mystics interpret it atheistically in terms of the doctrine of *sunyata* (the void, absolute emptiness), Christian mystics, such as Eckhart and Ruysbroeck, interpret it as an impersonal godhead beyond the Trinity of Father, Son and Holy Ghost, while more devotional mystics such as St Teresa conceive of the experience as union with God.[129]

Stace concludes that characteristics 3 to 7 constitute a universal core of mysticism throughout the ages, and that the differences between the first two characteristics in introvertive and extrovertive experience are minor. In the latter, there is sometimes a sense of non-temporality, though never non-spatiality; there is also a sense of unity, of a common life or One behind the phenomenal many; while in introvertive experience it is a consciousness of undifferentiated unity, which leads Stace to judge that extrovertive experience is an "incomplete version of the completeness realized in the introvertive type".[130] Stace then argues that our ethics derive from the mystical experience of unity or oneness. From the illusion of egotism, the conviction that one is a separate

125 See ibid., 86.
126 Ibid., 88.
127 Ibid., 89.
128 See W.T. Stace, *The Teachings of the Mystics* (New York: New American Library, 1960), 23 and Marshall, *Mystical Encounters*, 151.
129 See Stace, *Mysticism*, 74, 109.
130 Ibid., 133.

self insulated from the world and other people, there arises "conflict, grasping, aggressiveness, selfishness, hatred, cruelty, malice, and other forms of evil", whereas the mystic perceives that there is no difference between herself and others, that both derive and have their being in a "Universal Self", and the emotional corollary of this is love. If ordinary men and women are nonetheless capable of feeling love and behaving in an ethical manner, it is because, on an unconscious level, they intuit this mystical unity.[131] Furthermore, Stace asserts that mysticism is the "sole fountain of love", and that if animals appear to love their offspring, it is because, quoting from Plato's *Symposium*, "love is of the immortal", and this is achieved by procreation. "The source of all appetition", writes Stace, "whether in men or in animals, is the hunger for the Immortal, the Good, the One".[132]

Huxley was chiefly concerned with the metaphysical framework afforded by the Perennial Philosophy, and somewhat less concerned with the experience of mystical union than other perennialists such as James, who offered countless examples in *Varieties of Religious Experience*, or with providing a precise typology of mysticism (although this can be found in the text, it is not flagged up in the manner of Otto and Stace). It is imperative to remember that Huxley compiled *The Perennial Philosophy* during World War II and that the intention behind the book was to advance a common mystical philosophy that would transcend national and religious differences, which, Huxley believed, was the best defence against further war and violence. The Perennial Philosophy, Huxley affirms, is the "Highest Common Factor" in world religions, which was first written down 2,500 years ago, and can be discerned in a variety of traditions, including neo-Advaita, Mahayana Buddhism, "Hebrew prophecy", Platonism and Neoplatonism, Christian mysticism, Sufism and Taoism. It can be boiled down to four fundamental tenets:

> First: the phenomenal world of matter and of individualized Consciousness – the world of things and animals and men and even gods – is the manifestation of a Divine Ground within which all partial realities have their being, and apart from which they would be nonexistent.
>
> Second: human beings are capable not merely of knowing about the Divine Ground by inference; they can also realize its existence by a direct intuition, superior to discursive reasoning. This immediate knowledge unites the knower with that which is known.

131 See ibid., 324–325.
132 Ibid., 320.

> Third: man possesses a double nature, a phenomenal ego and an eternal Self, which is the inner man, the spirit, the spark of divinity within the soul. It is possible for a man, if he so desires, to identify himself with the spirit and therefore with the Divine Ground, which is of the same or like nature, with the spirit.
>
> Fourth: man's life on earth has only one end and purpose: to identify himself with his eternal Self and so to come, to unitive knowledge of the Divine Ground.[133]

Mystical traditions tend to be emanationist, with a transcendent godhead that emanates, usually via a series of hypostases, the phenomenal world.[134] This is the thrust of the first tenet and can be illustrated from a variety of traditions. One of the most influential emanationist models in the West is provided by Plotinus. In the Neoplatonic cosmology, the godhead is called the One, which originates a series of emanations of being: the first hypostasis is called the *nous* (intellect or absolute consciousness), which produces the ideal world of Platonic forms (the intelligible world) and the soul (*psyche*), which in turn animates the body and the phenomenal world. This model is followed by Eckhart, who posited, as noted above, an impersonal godhead or Ground of Being, which is the transcendent source of the Christian trinity, from which phenomena "spill forth".[135] As noted in Chapter 1, Huxley's phrase divine Ground derives from Eckhart, and though some scholars stress the influence of neo-Advaita on the Perennial Philosophy,[136] the most-cited mystic is Eckhart, with thirty-four entries in the index, which compares favourably to Shankara (nine), Vedanta (four) and the *Upanishads* (three). "God and Godhead are as distinct as heaven and earth", writes Eckhart. "Heaven stands a thousand miles above the earth, and even so the Godhead is above God".[137] In neo-Advaita, the godhead is *brahman*, which is the source of the Hindu trinity of Brahma, Vishnu and Śiva, whose roles respectively are creator, sustainer and destroyer of the world. Likewise, in Taoism, we find an emanationist cosmology, with the Tao

133 Aldous Huxley, introduction to *The Song of God: Bhagavad-Gita*, trans. Swami Pravabhananda and Christopher Isherwood (New York: Mentor Books, 1958), 13. This was written in 1944 and contains the best account of the Perennial Philosophy, whereas in the book of that name, perhaps because Huxley is offering countless examples of the Perennial Philosophy, he does not elucidate it in his own words as clearly as in the extract above.

134 See Jones, *Philosophy of Mysticism*, 180.

135 See ibid.

136 See for instance Sawyer, *Aldous Huxley*, 124.

137 Quoted in Huxley, *Perennial Philosophy*, 30.

giving rise to the One, and the One producing the Two (yin and yang), and the Two giving birth to the Ten Thousand Things (the phenomenal world).[138] In Mahayana Buddhism, according to Huxley, the divine Ground is known as the "Pure Light of the Void", and the "place of the High Gods is taken by the Dhyani-Buddhas".[139]

In the second tenet, the "direct intuition" that unites the knower with the divine Ground is mystical in nature, and presumably conveys a noetic quality sufficient for the mystic to realise the fundamental tenets of the Perennial Philosophy. Indeed, Huxley argues that if humans in prehistory were as susceptible to mystical experience as their historical counterparts, then an oral form of the Perennial Philosophy would vastly predate its first appearance in writing. "In India", Huxley writes,

> the scriptures were regarded, not as revelations made at some given moment of history, but as eternal gospels, existent from everlasting to everlasting, inasmuch as coeval with man, or for that matter with any other kind of corporeal or incorporeal being possessed of reason.[140]

He also notes that the religious culture of "contemporary primitives" has two main strands: an exoteric polytheistic one for the many, and an esoteric monotheistic one for the initiated, and posits that this pattern may well have obtained in prehistory.[141]

Although Huxley does not distinguish, in the second tenet, between different types of mysticism, and it can be read as applying both to introvertive and extrovertive experience, he does describe two different mystical ways in the text. These are the "way to Reality in and through the soul", and the "way to Reality in and through the world".[142] The latter is what Stace terms extrovertive experience. Huxley refers to Bucke's experience of cosmic consciousness as an example of this type and compares it to the Catholic notion of "gratuitous grace", such as the gift of healing, which can be bestowed on saint and sinner alike, but does not necessarily betoken salvation.[143] Bucke's experience, Huxley argues, would not have led to salvation unless he had also experienced unitive knowledge of the divine Ground in his soul. Another extrovertive example

138 See Jeaneane Fowler, *An Introduction to the Philosophy and Religion of Taoism: Pathways to Immortality* (Brighton: Sussex Academic Press, 2005), 110–111.

139 Huxley, introduction to *The Song of God*, 14.

140 Huxley, *Perennial Philosophy*, 18.

141 See ibid., 19.

142 See ibid., 56.

143 See ibid., 68.

Huxley discusses is the nature mysticism of Wordsworth, such as the following lines from "Tintern Abbey":

> And I have felt
> A presence that disturbs me with the joy
> Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime
> Of something far more deeply interfused,
> Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
> And the round ocean and the living air,
> And the blue sky, and in the mind of man.[144]

There is no evidence, Huxley avers, that this type of "theophany" made a dent in Wordsworth's overweening egotism, and this would have rendered introvertive experience impossible, which is predicated on a transcendence of the ego. While poets like Wordsworth worshipped nature "as though she were God", Christian mystics like St Bernard revered nature "as a teacher" and "as a means to God".[145]

The "way to Reality in and through the soul" is what Stace terms introvertive experience, but where Stace holds that this form of mysticism is superior to extrovertive experience, Huxley regards introvertive experience by itself as inadequate. This idea can be found in the following excerpt from Mozi:

> The Sravaka (literally "hearer", the name given by Mahayana Buddhists to contemplatives of the Hinayana school) fails to perceive that Mind, as it is in itself, has no stages, no causation. Disciplining himself in the cause, he has attained the result and abides in the samadhi (contemplation) of Emptiness for ever so many aeons. However enlightened in this way, the Sravaka is not at all on the right track. […]. The Sravaka has buried himself in Emptiness and does not know how to get out of his quiet contemplation, for he has no insight into the Buddha-nature itself.[146]

There is a third and superior way, Huxley affirms, which "leads to the divine Ground simultaneously in the perceiver and in that which is perceived", and seems to be a combination of introvertive and extrovertive experience. Huxley

144 William Wordsworth, "Lines Written a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey On Revisiting the Banks of the Wye During a Tour, July 13, 1798", in *Selected Poems*, ed. Stephen Gill (London: Penguin, 2004), 64.

145 See Huxley, *Perennial Philosophy*, 68–69.

146 Ibid., 60–61.

gives several examples of this type, including this one from the Zen master Huangbo Xiyun:

> When followers of Zen fail to go beyond the world of their senses and thoughts, all their doings and movements are of no significance. But when the senses and thoughts are annihilated, all the passages to Universal Mind are blocked, and no entrance then becomes possible. The original Mind is to be recognized along with the working of the senses and thoughts – only it does not belong to them, nor yet is it independent of them. Do not build up your views upon your senses and thoughts, do not base your understanding upon your senses and thoughts; but at the same time do not seek the Mind away from your senses and thoughts, do not try to grasp Reality by rejecting your senses and thoughts. When you are neither attached to, nor detached from, them, then you enjoy your perfect unobstructed freedom, then you have your seat of enlightenment.[147]

Huxley was particularly attracted to Mahayana and Zen Buddhism because they taught the "way to spiritual Knowledge in its fullness as well as in its heights, in and through the world as well as in and through the soul".[148] For Mahayanists, the exemplary figure was the *bodhisattva*, a contemplative who has attained *nirvana*, but chooses to remain in *samsara* in order to help others achieve enlightenment. Huxley favourably contrasts the *bodhisattva* to the "Hinayana" contemplative known as the *arhat*, who renounces the world as an obstacle to enlightenment, and seeks *nirvana* in the "heights" by gazing inward in meditation (*vipassana*). The *bodhisattva*, on the other hand, perceives that *nirvana* and *samsara*, eternity and time, are one.[149]

This is symbolised, for Huxley, in the Ten Ox-Herding Pictures of Zen Buddhism. The ox-herd is seeking enlightenment, and captures the ox, which Huxley interprets as his "unregenerate self", and which is tamed or disciplined and changes colour from black to white. One of the pictures is entirely blank, symbolising knowledge of the divine Ground in the heights, but this is not the end of the sequence; the ox-herd rides his ox back to the world of unregenerate humans (the "fullness"), and there mingles with "wine-bibbers and butchers" (i.e. sinners), who are subsequently converted into Buddhas. "Because [the ox-herd] now loves", Huxley writes, "loves to the extent of being identified with

147 Ibid., 58–59.
148 Ibid., 62.
149 See ibid., 70.

the divine object of his love, he can do what he likes; for what he likes is what the [Tao or] Nature of Things likes".[150] This is what St Augustine meant by the maxim *Ama et fac quod vis* (love and do what you will), but unfortunately only the enlightened can act in this way, since their actions will be in harmony with the godhead or Tao. If "unregenerate people" take it on trust that *nirvana* and *samsara* are one, there invariably follows the kind of antinomian behaviour that Huxley characterises as "God-eclipsing".[151] An apt example of this is provided by the murderous actions of Charles Manson, who was driven by the belief: "If God is one, what is bad?"[152]

The third tenet can be found in many traditions. One of the key concepts expounded in the *Upanishads* is that the *atman* is one with *brahman*. Huxley quotes several examples from Shankara, such as:

> The wise man is one who understands that the essence of Brahman and of Atman is Pure Consciousness, and who realizes their absolute identity. The identity of Atman and Brahman is affirmed in hundreds of sacred texts. [...]
>
> Supreme, beyond the power of speech to express, Brahman may be apprehended by the eye of pure illumination. Pure, absolute and eternal Reality – such is Brahman, and "thou art That".[153]

The phrase "thou art That" (or *tat tvam asi* in Sanskrit) occurs in the Chandogya Upanishad, in which Svetaketu, an arrogant student of the Vedas, is taught by his father that *brahman* permeates his body like salt dissolved in water. Consequently, his father informs him: "thou, Svetaketu, art That", i.e. *brahman*.[154] While Huxley acknowledges that in orthodox Christianity there is no identity between the soul and God,[155] he finds a concise example of the third tenet in Eckhart: "To gauge the soul we must gauge it with God, for the Ground of God and the Ground of the Soul are one and the same".[156] In Islam, it is heretical to claim an identity between God and humans, and Huxley has to content himself with the following anecdote from the Sufi saint Bayazid of Bistun: when someone knocked on his door and asked if Bayazid was there, he

150 Ibid., 71.
151 See ibid., 70.
152 Quoted in Jones, *Philosophy of Mysticism*, 297.
153 Huxley, *Perennial Philosophy*, 6.
154 Ibid., 4.
155 See Huxley, introduction to *The Song of God*, 15.
156 Huxley, *Perennial Philosophy*, 12.

replied: "Is anybody here except God?"[157] Huxley finds a better example from Mahayana Buddhism, and quotes the following from the Lankavatara Sutra: "The self realized in your inmost consciousness appears in its purity; this is the Tathagata-garbha (literally, Buddha-womb) [...] Pure in its own nature and free from the category of finite and infinite, Universal Mind is the undefiled Buddha-womb".[158]

The fourth tenet proclaims that the ultimate goal of life is mystical: to achieve "unitive knowledge of the divine Ground". This knowledge will not only confirm the truth of the Perennial Philosophy, it is the key to salvation.[159] One of the chief misconceptions about the Perennial Philosophy is that it is universalist in the strong sense,[160] in other words that the perennialist tenets are universally found in *all* religions at all times, whereas Huxley's claim is that they are *perennial*, and recur throughout history in several traditions.[161] This fourth tenet is obviously not universal, since in the Abrahamic religions salvation is not contingent on mystical experience. For orthodox Christians, Huxley notes, heaven signifies "a happy posthumous condition of indefinite personal survival, conceived of as a reward for good behaviour". However, he continues,

> for those who, within the various religious traditions, have accepted the Perennial Philosophy as a theory and have done their best to live it out in practice, "heaven" is something else. They aspire to be delivered out of separate selfhood in time and into eternity as realized in the unitive knowledge of the divine Ground. Since the Ground can and ought to be unitively known in the present life (whose ultimate end and purpose is nothing but this knowledge), "heaven" is not an exclusively posthumous condition. He only is completely "saved" who is delivered here and now.[162]

For the orthodox Christian, then, who relies on dogma and ritual rather than mystical identity, the best that can be hoped for is "survival" in a posthumous "heaven", but this offers no opportunity for "immortality", which Huxley defines as "participation in the eternal now of the divine Ground".[163] Both introvertive and some forms of extrovertive experience would afford this kind of

157 Ibid.
158 Ibid., 8.
159 See Huxley, introduction to *The Song of God*, 16.
160 See for instance Oldmeadow, *Journeys East*, 81.
161 See Jonathan Shear, "On Mystical Experiences as Support for the Perennial Philosophy", *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 62, no. 2 (1994): 332n17.
162 Huxley, *Perennial Philosophy*, 202.
163 Ibid., 211.

immortality, but for Huxley the ideal is enlightenment, which usually denotes a permanent state of mystical identity in which the mystic perceives the godhead not only in the heights of her soul but in the fullness or multiplicity of the phenomenal world. There is a "general enhancement and intensification of consciousness, and at the same time an extension and transfiguration".[164]

Any kind of mystical experience is incredibly rare, much less full-blown enlightenment, and Huxley acknowledged that "Many are called, but few are chosen" (Matthew 22:14),[165] and was himself only capable of achieving a form of extrovertive experience with the help of psychedelic drugs. For those who are not called or make no attempt to be chosen, there is the possibility of rebirth. Although Huxley does not present reincarnation as a tenet of the Perennial Philosophy, he seems to favour the Hindu and Buddhist attitude of a limitless "divine patience" over the Christian view that we are only given a single shot at salvation.[166] "The opportunity for coming to unitive knowledge will", Huxley asserts, "in one way or another, continually be offered until all sentient beings realize Who in fact they are".[167]

Huxley was also at pains to point out the "ethical corollaries" of the Perennial Philosophy that had a direct bearing on World War II.[168] For example, the soteriological goal of the Perennial Philosophy is the transcendence of time and the experience of eternity (the divine Ground). Huxley believed that the war and the besetting evils of his era were primarily caused by the "idolatrous worship of things in time", such as technology, the nation and the self.[169] Human beings embraced their time-bound egos and were largely ignorant of their eternal *atman* or soul. Indeed, the ego was the chief obstacle to unitive knowledge of the Ground, since this required charity and self-abnegation.[170] Rather than worshipping God, or the impersonal godhead of the Perennial Philosophy, people idolatrously worshipped their nation, and uncritically accepted their nation's divine right to colonise other countries and wage war against them for the greater glory of the nation, and this had led to the outbreak of two World Wars in Huxley's lifetime. Belief in God had largely been usurped by a belief in progress, and thus salvation was no longer sought in the eternity of the divine Ground but in the future, and the realisation of this revolutionary or utopian end justified the employment of the most rebarbative means in

164 Ibid, 299.
165 Ibid., 211.
166 See ibid., 211, 213–214, 296.
167 Ibid., 21.
168 See Huxley, introduction to *The Song of God*, 21.
169 Huxley, *Perennial Philosophy*, 95.
170 See Huxley, introduction to *The Song of God*, 15.

the present.[171] Technological progress had produced the "four-motor bomber loaded with white phosphorus and high explosives" and had been achieved by the instrumental exploitation of nature; the Perennial Philosophy, in contrast, emphasised the immanence as well as the transcendence of the godhead, and inspired an attitude of reverence and respect for animals and nature (the ecological aspect of the Perennial Philosophy will be discussed in Chapter 6). What was paramount for perennialists was not the promise of a Brave New World in the future, it was the experience of eternity in the present.[172]

Steven Katz, Contextualism and Its Critics

Huxley's Perennial Philosophy, and, more generally, the perennialism of Stace, Huston Smith, Mircea Eliade and Alan Watts, flourished in the academy and in the wider counterculture of the late 1960s and early 70s.[173] By the end of the 70s, however, the tide had begun to turn under the impetus of postmodernism, with its stance of scepticism or incredulity towards absolutes, essences, universals and metanarratives, and in 1978 the philosopher and scholar of Judaism Steven T. Katz published his seminal essay "Language, Epistemology, and Mysticism", which spearheaded the attack on perennialism. Katz argued that all experiences, both mystical and mundane, are constructed or mediated by our language, beliefs, cultural expectations and so on. Where Huxley would argue that Hindu mystics had the same experience of mystical identity as Meister Eckhart and John of the Cross, but described the experience using Hindu concepts and terms (*brahman*, *samadhi*, *moksha*), Katz avers that the Hindu mystic's experience is mediated or constructed by his or her Hindu beliefs and expectations.[174] This position is known as contextualism by Katz and his followers, and constructivism by his critics. Katz identifies three perennialist "schemas", which he presents in reverse order of sophistication:

171 See Huxley, *Perennial Philosophy*, 200.

172 See ibid., 79–80.

173 For the names on this list, some of whom (e.g. Smith) might be classified as Traditionalists, see Robert K.C. Forman, "Of Deserts and Doors: Methodology for the Study of Mysticism", *Sophia* 32, no. 1 (1993): 31 and idem, "Introduction: Mysticism, Constructivism, and Forgetting", in *The Problem of Pure Consciousness: Mysticism and Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 3.

174 See Steven T. Katz, "Language, Epistemology, and Mysticism", in *Mysticism and Philosophical Awareness*, ed. Steven T. Katz (London: Sheldon Press, 1978), 26. This is a paraphrase of Katz's argument, and in the above example Katz does not mention Huxley.

(I). All mystical experiences are the same; even their descriptions reflect an underlying similarity which transcends cultural or religious diversity. […]
(II). All mystical experiences are the same but the mystics' reports about their experiences are culturally bound. Thus they use the available symbols of their cultural-religious milieu to describe their experience. […]
(III). All mystical experience can be divided into a small class of "types" which cut across cultural boundaries. Though the language used by mystics to describe their experience is culturally bound, their experience is not.[175]

Katz's stated goal is to discredit the first thesis, which he implicitly associates with Huxley, asserting that "[t]here is no *philosophia perennis*, Huxley and many others notwithstanding".[176]

In order to torpedo the idea that all mystical experiences are the same, Katz compares the Jewish mystical state of *devekuth* with the Buddhist *nirvana*. The former should be conceived

> not as an absorption into God, or as a unity with the divine but rather as a loving intimacy, a 'clinging to' God, a relation which all the time is aware of the duality of God and mystic, i.e. which *experiences* God as Other rather than Self.[177]

Whereas in Buddhism, there is no self, no *atman* that is a spark from, and finds its being in, the godhead, because there is no godhead; thus *nirvana* does not signify an intimate identity or "clinging to God", but rather the end of suffering and liberation from the cycle of rebirth (*samsara*). Katz also provides a long quotation delineating the several stages a Buddhist aspirant must pass through if she hopes to attain *nirvana*, and compares this to the preparations that the Jewish mystic must undertake, in order to prove his thesis that "there is a clear causal connection between the religious and social structure one brings to experience and the nature of one's actual religious experience".[178] So where the Jewish mystic seeks to "*purify his soul*" and free it from the unspiritual material body, in order to cling to the emanations (*Sefiroth*) of God, the Buddhist

175 Katz, "Mysticism", 23–24.
176 Ibid., 24.
177 Ibid., 35–36.
178 Ibid., 40.

aspirant follows the noble eightfold path in order to extinguish the sense of a permanent desiring self, which is the cause of suffering, and therefore *nirvana* is not a "relational state", but the "absence of all relation, all personality, all love".[179] For Katz, it is inconceivable that the Buddhist's experience of the "'empty' calm" of *nirvana* is the same as the Jewish mystic's experience of the loving intimacy between himself and God's emanations.[180]

Katz criticises perennialists such as James and Stace for composing lists of mystical characteristics, which, he argues, are so abstract and vague they can be read into radically different experiences, rather than revealing their similarity. He focuses on Stace's third characteristic: "the sense of objectivity or reality". Katz allows that while mystics all claim to have experienced an objective Reality, this Reality is irreconcilably different across the traditions, so for instance *nirvana* is the ultimate Reality for Buddhists but this is hardly the same as the God of Jewish mysticism, the *brahman* with which Hindu mystics identify or the Nature of extrovertive mystics such as Richard Jefferies.[181] And just because each mystic claims that this Reality is "ineffable" (Stace's seventh characteristic), does not mean that the Buddhist and Jewish mystics' Reality is the same. Likewise, Stace notes that mystics often use the term "nothingness" to describe introvertive experience, but Katz contends that when this term is subjected to contextual analysis it denotes a variety of different meanings. For instance, in Jewish mysticism, nothingness is a translation of the "term *Ayin* which is used in Kabbalistic literature as a name of God relating to the first acts of self-revelation from his self-contained mysteriousness as *Eyn Sof* (God as He is in Himself) and yet still prior to His manifestation as the first Sefirah *Keter*", and, as noted above, Jewish mystics cannot experience a relational identity with the *Eyn Sof* but only an intimacy with the emanations; and this in turn is quite distinct from the term *Mu*, which is the "Chinese and Japanese Buddhist term for 'nothingness' and 'non-being'", and does not refer to "God as he is in himself" but "to the absolute ontological condition of emptiness or *sunyata*"; and the Buddhist *Mu* has nothing in common with the German word *nichts*, employed by Meister Eckhart, as the latter "seeks the re-birth of his soul now purified through its immersion into the Gottheit, whereas the Buddhist seeks *sunyata* as the transcendence or liberation from all selfhood".[182]

So how does Katz's contextualist critique apply to Huxley's Perennial Philosophy? Like Stace, Huxley pushes disparate doctrines and terms into the procrustean bed of the Perennial Philosophy, and this is perhaps most apparent

179 See ibid., 36–39.
180 See ibid., 39–40.
181 See ibid., 50.
182 See ibid., 52–53.

in his treatment of Buddhism. In order to illustrate this, I shall examine more closely some of Huxley's examples quoted above. Huxley uses the notion of the Tathagata-garbha or Buddha-womb as an analogue of the neo-Advaitin *atman*, quoting from the Lankavatara Sutra, but in this sutra it expressly states that the Tathagata-garbha is only "imagined by the ignorant as an ego-soul (*pudgala* or *atman*)".[183] The gist of the doctrine seems to be that all sentient beings are potentially capable of becoming a Buddha; but the doctrine appears in several sutras and can be read in a variety of ways. For instance, in the Tathagatagarbha Sutra, the Buddha affirms that all beings "are possessed of the Matrix of the Tathagata, endowed with virtues, always pure, and hence are not different from me".[184] But the Buddha is a human being who has attained *nirvana*, not a godhead or *brahman*.

Huxley's analogue of the godhead is the Clear Light of Tibetan Buddhism.[185] Huxley may well have been influenced, in this interpretation, by the introduction to *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* by W.Y. Evans-Wentz, who was a Theosophist and an adherent of Hindu Yoga, and who sought to syncretise these traditions with the Bardo Thödol.[186] His introduction is riddled with allusions to Theosophy, to initiates and esoteric interpretations, and he seems to conflate the initiates or lamas of Tibetan Buddhism with the Theosophical Masters, many of whom were alleged to reside in Tibet. He writes about Buddhist doctrines in neo-Advaitin terms, for instance he represents enlightenment in terms of breaking through the veil of *maya* and apprehending ultimate Reality,[187] and therefore he reads the Clear Light of Tibetan Buddhism as an emanationist godhead in keeping with *brahman* or the Theosophical Absolute. A more orthodox reading of the Clear Light is that it is a "profound state of consciousness" experienced by Buddhas in *nirvana*, and by less exalted humans at the moment of death due to the dissolution of the personality; if the deceased recognises the Clear Light as reality, he or she achieves liberation from *samsara*.[188] For contextualists like Katz, there is a significant difference between the "no-self, no-God, no-relation experience of *nirvana*" and union

183 *The Lankavatara Sutra: A Mahayana Text*, trans. D.T. Suzuki (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2003), xxviii.

184 Quoted in Paul Williams, *Mahayana Buddhism: The Doctrinal Foundations*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2009), 104.

185 See for instance Huxley, *Perennial Philosophy*, 32.

186 See Donald S. Lopez, Jr, foreword to *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*, trans. Lāma Kazi Dawa-Samdup (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), K-H and Jake Poller, introduction to *Altered Consciousness in the Twentieth Century*, 30.

187 See Lopez, Jr, foreword to *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*, K-L.

188 See ibid., J.

or identity with the godhead of Christian and Hindu mystics.[189] Huxley's analogue of the Christian and Hindu trinities is even weaker: the five Dhyani Buddhas are personifications of the five attributes of a Buddha, and are associated with the *dharmakāya* (Body of Truth), which also represents, among other things, the qualities exhibited by a Buddha.[190] "Contained in the Five Dhyani Buddhas", writes Evans-Wentz, "lies the Sacred Way leading to At-one-ment in the *Dharma-Kāya*, to Buddhahood, to Perfect Enlightenment".[191] In other words, in order to attain enlightenment, one must master the five qualities or types of wisdom possessed by the Buddha. Evans-Wentz's use of the word "At-one-ment" again betrays his neo-Advaitin interpretation of Buddhist doctrine, since another connotation of *dharmakāya* is the realisation of emptiness in *nirvana*, rather than "At-one-ment" with *brahman*.[192]

On the other hand, it is fair to say that Katz overestimates Huxley's hermeneutical naivety, for Huxley does not claim that "[a]ll mystical experiences are the same" (Katz's first schema), rather he argues that "mystical experience can be divided into a small class of 'types' which cut across cultural boundaries", and that the language mystics use to describes these experiences is "culturally bound" (schema three).[193] As noted above, Huxley maps out three mystical types: the "way to Reality in and through the soul" (introvertive experience), the "way to Reality in and through the world" (extrovertive experience) and a combination of the two that allows the mystic to remain in *samsara* while helping others along the path to enlightenment. Huxley also acknowledges that while the Perennial Philosophy is received in a "chemically pure state", the act of translating it into language, by a particular person and at a particular time "automatically imposes a certain sociological and personal bias on the doctrines so formulated".[194] Of course, Katz would argue that there's no such thing as a "chemically pure state" and that even mystical experiences are informed by cultural and religious expectations.

189 Katz, "Mysticism", 41.

190 See Williams, *Mahayana Buddhism*, 177.

191 W.Y. Evans-Wentz, introduction to *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*, 15.

192 The *dharmakāya* is one of the Three Bodies of the Buddha (*trikâya*), and Huxley also uses this as an analogue of the trinity of Christianity and Hinduism (see *Perennial Philosophy*, 22). But the *trikâya* is incredibly complex, signifying different things in different contexts, and would take a disproportionate amount of space to unpack. It is worth noting, though, that Evans-Wentz also presents the *trikâya* as an "Esoteric Trinity" that can only be understood by initiates. See Evans-Wentz, introduction to *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*, 13–14.

193 Katz, "Mysticism", 23.

194 Huxley, introduction to *The Song of God*, 12.

This brings me to Katz's critics and their objections to contextualism. Perhaps the most cogent criticism of contextualism is that while Katz repeatedly claims to have provided evidence to substantiate his thesis about the constructed nature of mystical experiences, all Katz actually proves is that the doctrines of, say, *nirvana* and *devekuth* are different, and on this basis he assumes that therefore the mystical experiences of Buddhist and Jewish mystics must be different too, but he never examines first-hand accounts of mystical experience in his article:[195] "Just setting this Buddhist understanding of the nature of things over against the Jewish should, in itself, already be strong evidence for the thesis that what the Buddhist experiences as *nirvana* is different from what the Jew experiences as *devekuth*".[196] But if, as Katz argues, there is a "clear causal connection" between one's religious training and tradition and one's mystical experiences, then every aspirant on the mystical path should be granted mystical experiences, but this is not the case.[197] Moreover, many people have mystical experiences outside of a specific tradition, such as atheists and children. Jones gives the example of the Jewish philosopher Simone Weil, who was a devout Marxist before her mystical experiences, which convinced her to become a Christian.[198] Paul Marshall gives several examples of mystical experience from childhood, in which the subjects were unacquainted with mysticism. For instance, Dorothy Spinney says of her introvertive experience: "One can hardly describe an experience in which one is caught up into – what? Something I had never read of, meditated on, or knew existed – as an unborn child couldn't realize a description of this world".[199] Robert K.C. Forman gives the example of the Zen Master John Daido Sensei Loori, who had his first mystical experience five years before taking up the practice of Zen Buddhism, and told Forman that it was the former that led him to the latter rather than the other way round.[200] Marshall also argues that if mystical experience is constructed, as Katz maintains, by religious doctrine it should be expressible rather than ineffable. Furthermore, many mystics note that the experience by far exceeds their expectations.[201]

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195 See Marshall, *Mystical Encounters*, 189; Jones, *Philosophy of Mysticism*, 67; and Forman, introduction to *Problem of Pure Consciousness*, 15.

196 Katz, "Mysticism", 38.

197 See Forman, introduction to *Problem of Pure Consciousness*, 14–15 and Marshall, *Mystical Encounters*, 190.

198 See Jones, *Philosophy of Mysticism*, 64.

199 Quoted in Marshall, *Mystical Encounters*, 192.

200 See Robert K.C. Forman, introduction to *The Innate Capacity: Mysticism, Psychology, and Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 6.

201 See Marshall, *Mystical Encounters*, 192–193.

Jones notes that rather than examining the first-hand accounts of mystical experience and developing his own theory in light of this, Katz took the constructivist paradigm that held sway in the social sciences and humanities and that argues that our mundane experiences are shaped and constructed by our culture, language and beliefs, and applied it to mystical experience.[202] Forman gives a few examples of the pervasiveness of the constructivist model: in psychology, our perceptions, responses and behaviour patterns are held to be largely shaped or determined by formative or traumatic experiences in the past; in linguistic relativity, the language we speak is held to influence (or in the "strong" version determine) our cognitions.[203] The classic example of the latter is that in English there is only one word for snow, and thus we can only recognise one type of snow, whereas the Eskimo make fine distinctions between different types of snow because they have many more words for it. But it is fairly easy to find good counterexamples: for instance, Jones points out that just because the Hopi have only one word for "flying things", this does not mean they are unable to distinguish between an insect, a plane and the pilot of a plane.[204] Consequently, the "strong" version of the so-called Sapir-Whorf hypothesis has largely been abandoned. But strong constructivists, anxious to avoid the charge of naïve realism, discountenance the role of the world (e.g. the different types of flying object) in experience: "the world-in-itself, if there is such a reality, is amorphous", writes Jones, describing the constructivist position,

> and so any configuration of concepts will do for coping with the world – we can make any "web of beliefs" fit by simply making enough adjustments to its parts – and thus in the final analysis reality does not constrain our creations. There is no role for any unknowable noumenon. Thus, any external "real" world in the end does not figure in determining our knowledge-claims; instead, our concepts exclusively shape our knowledge-claims.[205]

Thus it is hardly surprising that Katz, while officially agnostic about the existence of a transcendent mystical object, makes no allowance for its influence in mystical experience.

202 See Jones, *Philosophy of Mysticism*, 61, 69.
203 See Forman, introduction to *Problem of Pure Consciousness*, 4–5.
204 See Jones, *Philosophy of Mysticism*, 66.
205 Ibid., 55.

Another criticism of contextualism is that it is unable to explain away those mystics who advanced heterodox ideas. For instance, many of Eckhart's teachings were deemed heretical.[206] Katz argues, though, that the "unitive Christian mystics", such as Eckhart, derived their ideas about uniting with an impersonal godhead beyond the trinity from Neoplatonic authors, such as Plotinus and Dionysius the Areopagite.[207] Perhaps a better example is Shankara, who had to downplay the importance of those passages in the *Upanishads* that contradicted his non-dualism, whereas other Hindu philosophers, such as Madvacharya, formulated a dualistic interpretation of Vedanta. Jones argues that Shankara interpreted the Vedas and the *Gita* in light of his mystical experiences, rather than deriving his mystical system from these texts.[208]

An objection raised by Forman (one of Katz's chief critics) is that the "pure consciousness event" (PCE), a type of introvertive experience that he defines as "wakeful though contentless (nonintentional) consciousness", is in fact unmediated. One of the examples Forman gives derives from his own experience as a practitioner of Transcendental Meditation:

> I had been meditating alone in my room all morning when someone knocked on my door. I heard the knock perfectly clearly, and upon hearing it I knew that, although there was no "waking up" before hearing the knock, for some indeterminate length of time prior to the knocking I had not been aware of anything in particular. I had been awake but with no content for my consciousness. Had no one knocked I doubt that I would ever have become aware that I had not been thinking or perceiving. The experience was so unremarkable, as it was utterly without content, that I simply would have begun at some point to recommence thinking and probably would never have taken note of my conscious persistence devoid of mental content.[209]

Jones argues that if indeed the PCE is devoid of content, then it logically follows that all PCEs are "phenomenally identical".[210] However, Jones opines that PCEs, or what he calls (following the typology of the philosopher William Wainwright) "depth-mystical experiences" are not "truly contentless", arguing that there is a noetic quality to the experience that remains with the mystic

206 See ibid., 64.
207 See Katz, "Mysticism", 42.
208 See Jones, *Philosophy of Mysticism*, 64.
209 Forman, introduction to *Problem of Pure Consciousness*, 28.
210 Jones, *Philosophy of Mysticism*, 59.

after it is over, a "sense of the direct awareness of beingness, consciousness, oneness, fundamentality, power, and immutability".[211] This noetic quality, though, appears to be absent from Forman's PCE, which barely fulfils two of Stace's criteria for introvertive experience: it is "nontemporal" in that Forman was not aware of time passing; and it is an experience of "pure consciousness", but there is no additional sense of ultimate reality, of "Unitary Consciousness", of "the One". But Stace's criteria are predicated on a model of mystical identity or union, whereas for Forman the PCE lays bare the innate spiritual nature of humans, the *atman* in neo-Advaita, the Buddha Nature in Buddhism, *puruṣa* in Samkhya and *pātañjali yoga*.[212]

According to Forman, the PCE, far from being constructed, emerges from a process of *de*construction.[213] In the Yoga Sutras, Pātañjali affirms: "The restraint of the modifications of the mind-stuff is Yoga" (*Yogas citta vṛtti nirodhaḥ*).[214] This is accomplished by practising the eight limbs of yoga, the last four of which are: *prāṇāyāma* (breath control), *pratyāhāra* (sense withdrawal), *dhāraṇā* (concentration) and *samadhi*. For Forman and the "deconstructionists" (or "perennial psychologists") this represents a deconditioning, a detachment from the world and our social and psychological constructions,[215] whereas Katz argues that yoga is in fact a complex "reconditioning", a "substituting of one form of conditioned and/or contextual consciousness for another".[216] On the contrary, Forman argues that meditation enables one to "lay aside and temporarily cease employing language and concepts", and thus these cannot be involved in the construction of mystical experience.[217]

Katz's categorical insistence that "[*t*]*here are NO pure* (*i.e. unmediated*) *experiences*" derives from the philosophy of Kant.[218] His Copernican revolution in epistemology moved the emphasis away from the object onto the subject. Kant argued that we cannot know the noumenal object in itself, and that our phenomenal sense impressions are mediated by a priori concepts (such as causality) and forms (space and time) that structure our knowledge of the world. But in the two-worlds interpretation of Kant's transcendental idealism,

211 Ibid.

212 See Forman, introduction to *The Innate Capacity*, 11–12.

213 See ibid., 3–7, 12.

214 *Yoga Sutras of Patanjali*, 3, 1: 2.

215 See Forman, introduction to *The Innate Capacity*, 3–7, 10–11 and Edward F. Kelly and Michael Grosso, "Mystical Experience", in *Irreducible Mind: Toward a Psychology for the 21st Century*, by Edward F. Kelly *et al.* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2010), 515.

216 Katz, "Mysticism", 57.

217 Forman, introduction to *The Innate Capacity*, 7.

218 Katz, "Mysticism", 26 (italics in original).

as noted in the last chapter, the noumenal world of things in themselves provides the sensory data that is then *mediated* in accordance with a priori concepts and categories, whereas in Katz's "strong" or "radical" constructivism the noumenal object (e.g. the godhead) has no input whatever, and experience is constructed (rather than mediated) by a posteriori cultural concepts and beliefs.[219] "Once the [noumenal] 'given' evaporates", argues Anthony Perovich, "a Kantian theory of knowledge is no longer appropriate: if there is nothing to be mediated, then there is no point in insisting on the mediated character of all experience".[220]

A further problem for Katz and the constructivists raised by the PCE is the philosophical unthinkability of a pure consciousness divorced from an intentional (i.e. mental, phenomenal) object. For instance, in Forman's PCE above he is no more aware of himself as a perceiving subject than he is of an intentional object, or in other words he is not conscious of pure consciousness; it is only after the experience that he becomes retrospectively aware of it. But for Katz, "all mental states are intentional", and so the PCE, rather than proving an exception to the rule, is dismissed as "logically impossible".[221] Likewise, noumenal objects of whatever kind, from objects in themselves up to the transcendent godhead, cannot impinge on our phenomenal consciousness, and thus mystical experience must be constructed from religious doctrine. Katz's strong contextualism, then, adopts an a priori rather than an empirical attitude to mystical experience, and so naturally Katz does not bother examining accounts of mystical experience because he has already concluded in advance that it is constructed from tradition.[222]

After Katz, there was a strong revulsion from perennialism, which became erroneously conflated (at least in the case of Huxley's Perennial Philosophy) with universalism, and mysticism was increasingly regarded as a modern construct or an "academic invention".[223] Far from being an unchanging essence, the noun "mysticism" was coined in the eighteenth century; Christian mystics

219 See Jones, *Philosophy of Mysticism*, 54. Moderate constructivists, such as Bernard McGinn, allow the noumenal object a role in mystical experience, but argue that one's socio-religious set plays a part in one's interpretation of the experience (see ibid., 57).

220 Anthony N. Perovich, Jr., "Does the Philosophy of Mysticism Rest on a Mistake?", in *Problem of Pure Consciousness*, 242.

221 See Jones, *Philosophy of Mysticism*, 61.

222 See ibid., 68.

223 Mark McIntosh, quoted in Louise Nelstrop, Kevin Magill and Bradley B. Onishi, introduction to *Christian Mysticism: An Introduction to Contemporary Theoretical Approaches* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), 1.

were known as "contemplatives"; and the adjective "mystical" denoted, among other things, an allegorical reading of the Bible as opposed to a literal one.[224] This hermeneutical meaning can be glimpsed in the first recorded usage of "mysticism" in the *OED* in 1724: "Just as remote from the real literal sense of Hoseah as the mysticism of the allegorists, and … altogether as obscure to the understanding". The word mysticism derives from the Greek adjective *mustikos*, meaning "hidden" or "secret", and was associated with the Greek mystery religions, whose initiates were sworn to secrecy.[225] In addition to "mystical theology", there was a mystical element in the liturgy, i.e. the mystery of God's presence in the Eucharist.[226] But as Jones points out, the adjective mystical also denoted a direct experiential apprehension of God, and there was an intimate link between "mystical theology" and mystical experience, with the former, presumably, being inspired by the latter.[227]

The French historian Michel de Certeau influentially argued that in mystical writings at the end of the sixteenth century and in the seventeenth century there was a shift in emphasis towards "interior experiences, detached from doctrine or Church life", and that this culminated in the fabrication of a Christian mystical tradition, which retrospectively included saints and early church fathers.[228] In the modern era, there was an increased focus on the individual rather than religious institutions, and his or her religious beliefs and experiences, and these developments led to the psychologisation of mysticism, starting with the German theologian Friedrich Schleiermacher and reaching its apogee with William James.[229] This misplaced emphasis on the experiential and psychological aspect of mysticism, argued its critics, overlooked the precise religious context of the individual mystics and the other meanings of the mystical in Christianity, and paved the way for the varieties of perennialism that emerged in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.[230] Obviously these arguments mostly pertain to mysticism in the Christian tradition, in which salvation is not dependent on "infused contemplation", whereas in, say,

224 See ibid. and King, *Orientalism and Religion*, 14–15.

225 See King, *Orientalism and Religion*, 14–15 and Kripal, "Mysticism", in *Blackwell Companion to the Study of Religion*, 322.

226 See King, *Orientalism and Religion*, 15 and Jones, *Philosophy of Mysticism*, 1.

227 See Jones, *Philosophy of Mysticism*, 2 and Jeffrey J. Kripal, "Mysticism Disputed: Major Debates in the Field", in *Secret Religion*, ed. April De Conick (New York: Macmillan, 2016), 307.

228 See Philip Sheldrake, "Unending Desire: de Certeau's 'Mystics'", *The Way Supplement* 102 (2001): 40 and King, *Orientalism and Religion*, 17–18.

229 See King, *Orientalism and Religion*, 21–23.

230 See ibid. and Grace M. Jantzen, "Mysticism and Experience", *Religious Studies* 25, no. 3 (1989): 295–297.

neo-Advaita, *pātañjali yoga* and Zen Buddhism there is a high soteriological value placed on precisely this kind of experiential mysticism, and this was known by different names (*moksha*, *samadhi*, *nirvana*) long before the modern coinage of the term mysticism.

In response to the challenge of contextualism, Huston Smith argued that the perennial philosophy derived from a core of compatible doctrines across religious traditions and did not claim that "mystical experiences are cross-culturally identical".[231] Even Huxley, whom Smith concedes is an "amateur" rather than a professional philosopher, grounds his Perennial Philosophy in doctrines as opposed to mystical experiences. In a footnote, Smith summarises the four tenets of the Perennial Philosophy quoted in full above, but fails to acknowledge that two of the four refer to mystical experience, which is represented as the final "end and purpose of life".[232] "To discern the truth of a metaphysical axiom", writes Smith,

> one need not have an "experience". The ontological discernments of pure intellection [...] have nothing to do with mystical rapture or access to states of "pure consciousness". The legitimacy of a metaphysical truth, evident to the intellect, does not depend on *samadhi* or gifts of "infused grace". Nowhere does the *Brahma* Sutra, e.g., appeal to mystical experience to support its metaphysical claims and arguments. The drift is the opposite. Ontological discernments are enlisted to elucidate or validate the yogas and the experiences they deliver.[233]

This claim marks Smith as a Traditionalist rather than a Perennial Philosopher in the manner of Huxley. One of the tenets of Traditionalism, noted above, is that the Tradition can be discerned or recovered in the "common denominators of the various religious and metaphysical traditions". This seems to require a kind of "mystical theology" in the manner of the Christian mystics or an esoteric interpretation akin to the Theosophists, and thus it follows that the "ontological discernments" made by the Traditionalists are largely contingent on initiation, though Smith does not mention this in his article. Another mark of Smith's Traditionalism is his belief that all religions contain the "Eternal Dharma" or truth, and thus that salvation may be obtained by following their orthodox forms, whereas Huxley argued that for the Abrahamic religions in

231 Huston Smith, "Is There a Perennial Philosophy?", *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 55, no. 3 (1987): 554.

232 See ibid., 554n3.

233 Ibid., 554.

particular the "truth" was only attainable by mystics whose methods were often regarded as heterodox, if not heretical, and that for most Christians and Jews the "truth" was obscured by sectarian dogma.[234] According to Sawyer, Smith was unaware of this discrepancy between his Traditionalist ideas and Huxley's Perennial Philosophy, and thus he identified himself as a perennialist.[235]

If prior to Katz and contextualism the emphasis was on the similarity of mystical experiences, after Katz the emphasis was on difference and cultural relativism. Jeffrey Kripal notes that while there are "few card-carrying perennialists, much less traditionalists, actively doing scholarship in the academy today, [...] many constructivists are incomplete constructivists, that is, they continue to suspect that there is something shared across cultures and climes below or beyond the historical constructs".[236] A surprising counter to the emphasis on difference comes from neuroscience, which, given its materialist or physicalist worldview, would seem to deny the possibility of mystical experience. Jones notes that some neuroscientific studies have suggested that there are "genuine mystical experiences – i.e., unique neurological events involving altered states of consciousness", though whether these involve some sort of identity with a godhead or divine Ground falls beyond the scope of these analyses.[237] Nonetheless, this would seem to contradict Katz's contention that there's no epistemological difference, *pace* Kant,[238] between ordinary experience and mystical experience. Moreover, recent neuroscientific research has indicated that a PCE may well be possible. If so, these experiences would be cross-culturally identical due to the common physiology of the human brain.[239]

There is also a small but influential group of intellectuals called the Sursem Group (which includes neuroscientists, philosophers, psychiatrists, physicists,

234 See Dana Sawyer, "Huxley, Heard, and Huston: The Perennial Philosophy and the Future of Religion", *Aldous Huxley Annual* 10–11 (2010–11): 326. For a Traditionalist articulation of the belief that all religions lead to salvation even in their exoteric forms, see Frithjof Schuon, *The Transcendent Unity of Religions* (Wheaton: Quest Books, 2005), 12–15.

235 See Sawyer, "Huxley, Heard, and Huston", 327. Sawyer does not use the word Traditionalist to identify Smith.

236 Kripal, "Mysticism Disputed", 309.

237 Jones, *Philosophy of Mysticism*, 39, cites research in Andrew Newberg, Eugene d'Aquili and Vince Rause, *Why God Won't Go Away: Brain Science and the Biology of Belief* (New York: Ballantine Books, 2002), 7.

238 See Perovich, "Does the Philosophy of Mysticism Rest on a Mistake?", 244.

239 See Jones, *Philosophy of Mysticism*, 61, who cites research from Ralph Hood, "The Common Core Thesis in the Study of Mysticism", in *Where God and Science Meet: How Brain and Evolutionary Studies Alter Our Understanding of Religion; The Psychology of Religious Experience*, ed. Patrick McNamara, vol. 3 (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2006) and Newberg, d'Aquili and Rause, *Why God Won't Go Away*.

scholars of religion and historians), who reject the prevailing scientific position that mind is ultimately nothing but an insignificant by-product or epiphenomenon of the physical brain and that consciousness is reducible to neurophysiological processes.[240] They champion the filter theory of consciousness (see Chapter 2 for details) first posited by Myers and James, and later taken up by Henri Bergson, C.D. Broad and Huxley, which argues that the brain filters or transduces consciousness from a cosmic mind, or what Huxley termed Mind at Large. This filter theory best explains the evidence they advance for near-death experiences, paranormal phenomena, reincarnation and mystical experiences.[241] In *The Doors of Perception* (1954), Huxley speculated that mescaline inhibits the enzymes that supply the brain with glucose, thereby impairing the efficiency of the reducing valve, which filters Mind at Large, and which consequently admits a greater portion of cosmic consciousness.[242] But if Huxley's theory is correct, then it follows that hypoglycaemics would be especially susceptible to mystical states, whereas this is not the case. More recent studies have shown that there is a "similarity between the chemical structures of psychedelics and neurotransmitters", which would "affect the transmission of signals between brain cells", producing a comparable effect to the widening of Huxley's reducing valve.[243] Kripal also cites recent research that appears to confirm Huxley's model of disinhibition.[244]

The conventional metaphor invoked by perennialists was that the motley religious traditions were but different paths that led up the same mountain, whereas Katz's position was that these paths led up different mountains. Kripal, summing up the current situation, writes:

240 See Edward F. Kelly, introduction to *Irreducible Mind: Toward a Psychology for the 21st Century*, xi. This is the first book by the Sursem Group, which takes its name from the Big Sur Symposium, or Survival Seminar, hosted by Michael Murphy at the Esalen Institute, Big Sur. More recently, the Sursem Group published another volume of their research: *Beyond Physicalism: Toward Reconciliation of Science and Spirituality*, ed. Edward F. Kelly, Adam Crabtree and Paul Marshall (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015). Other prominent members of Sursem include Charles T. Tart, Henry P. Stapp and Jeffrey Kripal.

241 For more on the Sursem Group, see Jeffrey J. Kripal, "Mind Matters: Esalen's Sursem Group and the Ethnography of Consciousness", in *What Matters? Ethnographies of Value in a Not So Secular Age*, ed. Ann Taves and Courtney Bender (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012).

242 See Huxley, *Doors*, in *CE* 5: 164–165.

243 See Marshall, *Mystical Encounters*, 239.

244 See Kripal, "Mysticism Disputed", 311, who cites Tom Shroder, *Acid Test: LSD, Ecstasy, and the Power to Heal* (New York: Blue Rider, 2014).

> What these new conversations around the nature of consciousness point toward is the possibility that, yes, the religions are marching up different mountains, and, yes, these mountains are constructions, but these mountains have been constructed by the religions with the same dirt and stone. Or, if you prefer, they all were pushed up out of the same tectonic plates from different seismic historical shifts in human consciousness and culture. In any case, there are different mountains, but they are all constructed out of the same ground, the same weird planet of the human.[245]

Conclusion

Huxley's Perennial Philosophy was but one of several influential typologies of mysticism in the twentieth century. It should be differentiated from other ancient wisdom traditions, such as the *prisca theologia*, Theosophy and Traditionalism. The Perennial Philosophy is not universalist, as some have contended, since in the Abrahamic religions salvation may be obtained through piety, prayer and so forth, rather than unitive knowledge of the divine Ground that constitutes salvation in the Perennial Philosophy. The Perennial Philosophy does not argue, *pace* Katz, that all mystical experiences are the same, but rather presents a threefold typology of introvertive experience, extrovertive experience and a combination of the two. If, in the wake of Katz's contextualist attack, perennialism was neglected and disparaged in the academy, there now seems to be a tentative return of interest in the similarities across the mystical traditions as opposed to their differences. In the next chapter, I focus on the mystical philosophy of Gerald Heard and Jiddu Krishnamurti, both of whom exercised considerable influence over Huxley and his conception of mysticism.

245 Kripal, "Mysticism Disputed", 311.

CHAPTER 4

Mysticism and Pacifism

Huxley's mystical turn in the mid-1930s was intimately associated with pacifism, and his pacifist convictions were reinforced by the mystical philosophy of Gerald Heard and Jiddu Krishnamurti. As noted in Chapter 1, Huxley's involvement with Ottoline Morrell and the Garsington set during World War I had led him to adopt a pacifist position, and the rise of Mussolini and Hitler and the imperial tensions of the 1930s had done nothing to change his mind. His disparaging article "What Gandhi Fails to See" (1930), would seem to contradict this statement, but Huxley was not objecting to Gandhi as a pacifist but as an "ascetic salvationist" whose spirituality blinded him to inconvenient facts, such as the "distressingly easy passage from non-violence to violence",[1] or the fact that reverting to a pre-industrial civilisation, as Gandhi was advocating, would entail the "death by starvation of millions upon millions of human beings" (in other words, the exponential increase in population made possible by industrialisation).[2] Huxley's interest in mysticism had been dampened by his trip to India and south-east Asia in 1925–26. In the article, Gandhi is pilloried as a representative of the kind of Hindu spirituality that Huxley had deplored in *Jesting Pilate* (1926): "To my mind 'spirituality' [...] is the primal curse of India and the cause of all her misfortunes. [...] A little less spirituality and the Indians would now be free – free from foreign dominion and from the tyranny of their own prejudices and traditions".[3] But as the 1930s progressed, Huxley was compelled by personal circumstances to re-evaluate his opinion of both Gandhi and mysticism and by 1936 he was publicly advocating *satyagraha* and practising meditation with Gerald Heard and members of the Peace Pledge Union (PPU).

In the autumn of 1934, Huxley began to suffer from insomnia and depression, and turned to the practice of meditation and *prāṇāyāma* to alleviate the symptoms. He may have been encouraged by Heard, who was organising group

1 Huxley was presumably thinking of the civil disobedience organised by Gandhi on March 30, 1919, to protest the passing of the Rowlatt Act, in which British troops opened fire on unarmed protestors, and which led to rioting, culminating in the Amritsar Massacre on April 10, 1919.

2 Aldous Huxley, "What Gandhi Fails to See", in *CE* 3: 233–234.

3 Aldous Huxley, "India and Burma", in *CE* 2: 469.

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meditation sessions in the hope of achieving an evolutionary breakthrough in which the members of the group would at once become telepathically aware of each others' thoughts as well as having mystical access to an Overmind or collective psychic field. Heard was primarily interested in neo-Advaita and yoga as providing means (such as meditation) to attain his own psychological and evolutionary ends, but he later used them in an attempt to attain pacifist aims (such as directing "*satyagraha*" at Hitler[4]). It was Heard who persuaded Huxley to join the PPU and to take an active role in recruiting members through making speeches and writing manifestoes. Initially, it seems that Huxley turned to mysticism reluctantly because it embodied a sort of non-sectarian religion that would encourage humankind to perceive itself as a monistic unity, as opposed to atomised individuals motivated solely by self-interest. But when Huxley moved to America he began to study neo-Advaita in earnest under the guidance of Swami Prabhavananda and the Vedanta Society of Southern California. Even after Huxley grew disillusioned with the PPU and its potential to effect change, he never abandoned his pacifist convictions, which in turn were bolstered by his allegiance to neo-Advaita as well as other forms of mysticism. The influence of Heard can be felt in *Eyeless in Gaza* (1936), *Ends and Means* (1937), *After Many a Summer* (1939) and, to some extent, *Grey Eminence* (1941).

Shortly after Huxley settled in Los Angeles in 1937, he met an Indian sage named Jiddu Krishnamurti, who, in his youth, had been the World Teacher of the Theosophical Society (TS). Huxley found Krishnamurti's mystical insights tremendously valuable, and the latter's pacifist convictions were a source of reassurance during World War II when Huxley felt guilty at once again avoiding the European fray. Furthermore, Krishnamurti proved a loyal friend at a time when Huxley's friendship with Heard was under strain. Part of the problem, as far as Huxley was concerned, was that even before Heard established Trabuco College (a spiritual community based in a monastery sixty miles outside Los Angeles), he was promoting himself as a guru, when his spiritual authority (such as it was) derived from his encyclopaedic knowledge of religious texts, rather than, as was the case with Krishnamurti, from first-hand mystical experience. In this chapter, I examine the influence of Heard and Krishnamurti and the symbiotic relationship between mysticism and pacifism in Huxley's work.

4 See Ropp, *Warrior's Way*, 90–91. Heard's misconception of *satyagraha* will be discussed below.

Henry Fitzgerald Heard (1889–1971)

Heard affirms that his first meeting with Huxley took place at the home of Raymond Mortimer in January 1929.[5] At the time, Heard was the editor of *The Realist*, to which Huxley contributed his essay on Pascal. In 1929, Huxley was still under the intellectual spell of D.H. Lawrence, and "Pascal" is a manifesto for Huxley's Lawrentian philosophy of life-worship, which is incompatible with the mysticism he would later espouse. For the life-worshipper, the point of being is to experience one's discrete selves in all their incoherence and diversity, rather than repressing those selves that contradict each other in order to achieve a false, unified self; whereas, after his mystical turn, Huxley would assert that the purpose of living was to transcend the self through meditation and abstinence in order to achieve "unitive knowledge of the divine Ground".[6]

Heard had intended to follow in the footsteps of his father and grandfather and become an Anglican clergyman, but his exposure to psychical research, philosophy and anthropology at Cambridge University, where he studied history and theology, in addition to the realisation of his homosexuality, precipitated a crisis of faith which culminated in a nervous breakdown.[7] After working as a private secretary for Lord Robson and Sir Horace Plunkett, Heard became a writer, broadcaster and journalist. David Izzo and Dana Sawyer opine that Heard was first introduced to mysticism by George Russell, who edited the *Irish Statesman*, and who was a good friend of Plunkett.[8] Russell had doubtless read the *Upanishads* and the *Bhagavad Gita*, but he was primarily an occultist (he was a Theosophist for several years before setting up his own Hermetic Society), and thus he seems an unlikely candidate.[9] Alison Falby dates Heard's interest in mysticism to the early 1920s, when Charlotte Shaw give him a copy of the *Bhagavad Gita*.[10] But given Heard's eclectic reading habits (he was reputed to peruse two thousand books a year[11]) and interest in religion, it seems

5 See Heard, "Poignant Prophet", 51.

6 Huxley, *Perennial Philosophy*, 59.

7 See Alison Falby, *Between the Pigeonholes: Gerald Heard, 1889–1971* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2008), 7–9.

8 See David Garrett Izzo, "'Dear Gerald': Letters to and from Aldous Huxley, Gerald Heard and Friends", *Aldous Huxley Annual* 1 (2001): 67 and Sawyer, *Aldous Huxley*, 96.

9 See Peter R. Kuch, "Russell, George William [pseud. A.E.], (1867–1935), journalist, poet, and agricultural economist", in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, accessed March 9, 2018, http://0-www.oxforddnb.com.catalogue.libraries.london.ac.uk/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-35880.

10 See Falby, *Pigeonholes*, 12.

11 See P.N. Furbank, *E.M. Forster: A Life* (London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1978), 136.

more probable that he would have discovered mysticism for himself at an earlier date. Heard had much in common with Huxley: he was an intellectual omnivore who kept abreast of both science and the humanities; his mother had died when he was three; and, as a result of a back injury when he was a child, he was deemed unfit for military service during World War I (in which his older brother, Captain Robert Bannatyne Heard, died in 1915, an experience which may well have been a factor in his becoming a pacifist).[12]

From 1930–34, Heard became well known as the BBC's Science Commentator, and his broadcasts were published each week in the *Listener* and were eventually collected in three books.[13] During this period, Heard was working on his inter-war trilogy – *The Ascent of Humanity* (1929), *The Social Substance of Religion* (1931) and *The Source of Civilization* (1935) – in which he attempted an ambitious synthesis of science, psychology, anthropology and religion. In *The Ascent of Humanity*, Heard propounded his theory of spiritual evolution. On the evidence of tendencies in so-called "primitive" tribes being studied by anthropologists, Heard maintains that originally man was endowed with "co-consciousness". In prehistory, Heard speculates, there were no individuals, there were only groups, whose members communicated with each other telepathically.[14] The next stage of psychic evolution is "self-consciousness", in which a few "proto-individuals" start to become aware of an independent consciousness apart from the group. A threshold or "limen" is interposed between the consciousness of the proto-individual and the shared telepathic "subconscious" of the group.[15] This process eventually becomes ubiquitous and culminates in our present age of rugged individualism. For Heard, the development of self-consciousness was akin to Pandora's box, unleashing violence and war upon the world after the peaceable era of co-consciousness. The final evolution, Heard predicts, will involve an enlargement of our consciousness that will result in "superconsciousness".

It is typical of Heard, who is a far from lucid expositor of his ideas, that he never gets around to defining precisely what superconsciousness is: for Paul Eros, it is "a state in which we would be simultaneously self-aware and aware of our subconscious extra-individuality",[16] in other words, a combination of

12 See Falby, *Pigeonholes*, 9.

13 *This Surprising World* (1932), *Science in the Making* (1935) and *Exploring the Stratosphere* (1936).

14 See Gerald Heard, *The Ascent of Humanity: An Essay on the Evolution of Civilization from Group Consciousness through Individuality to Super-Consciousness* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1929), 14–15, 38.

15 Ibid., 50.

16 Paul Eros, "'One of the Most Penetrating Minds in England': Gerald Heard and the British Intelligentsia of the Interwar Period" (DPhil thesis, Corpus Christi College, Oxford, 2011), 27 (see also 34).

self-consciousness and co-consciousness. But for Heard, superconsciousness also seems to involve telepathic awareness of a cosmic mind or what he refers to as a "field of consciousness which is impersonal".[17] Heard argues that mediums such as Leonora Piper derived their information not from spirits of the deceased but from this impersonal psychic field. This also explains other paranormal phenomena such as "cryptaesthesia", which Heard defines as the faculty of gleaning memories and general knowledge from places.[18] He gives as an example of this process the excavations of the ruins of Glastonbury Abbey conducted by Frederick Bligh Bond in the 1910s, which revealed the lost Edgar chapel, and which were allegedly guided by information from an automatic writing script produced in conjunction with "John Alleyne" (John A. Bartlett) during the years 1907–12.[19] Heard writes that Bond "inclined to the hypothesis that he and his fellow medium were in touch with an impersonal memory – the 'idea' of the long-vanished buildings, the constructional vision that they once had been in Mind, now no longer focused in individuality".[20] It is worth examining Bond's notion of "cosmic Memory", as this may well have inspired or at least bolstered Heard's homologous notion of an impersonal psychic field. Bond and Alleyne held that

> the embodied consciousness of every individual is but a part, and a fragmentary part, of a transcendent whole, and that within the mind of each there is a door through which Reality may enter as Idea – Idea presupposing a greater, even a cosmic Memory, conscious or unconscious, active or latent, and embracing not only all individual experience and revivifying forgotten pages of life, but also Idea involving yet wider fields, transcending the ordinary limits of time, space, and personality.[21]

Bond was a member of the Society for Psychical Research (SPR), and he posits Myers' "subliminal powers of mind" as a possible mechanism by which to access this cosmic memory.[22]

Heard was also influenced by Myers. For example, the "limen" Heard refers to that "divides the conscious from the subconscious" is a concept advanced by Myers in *Human Personality and Its Survival of Bodily Death* (1903), in which

17 Heard, *Ascent of Humanity*, 296.
18 See ibid., 315.
19 See ibid., 316 and Frederick Bligh Bond, *The Gate of Remembrance: The Story of the Psychological Experiment which Resulted in the Discovery of the Edgar Chapel at Glastonbury*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: B.H. Blackwell, 1918), 26.
20 Heard, *Ascent of Humanity*, 316.
21 Bond, *Gate of Remembrance*, 19–20.
22 See ibid., 17–18.

it divides the subliminal and supraliminal minds.[23] What Myers calls the "metetherial environment", a spiritual or metaphysical realm in which the soul somehow "subsists" while its body lives on earth, and in which it remains after the body's demise, sounds a lot like Heard's impersonal psychic field (and Bond's cosmic memory).[24] Like Heard, Myers maintained that humankind was undergoing a process of *spiritual* rather than physical evolution, to which he credited the paranormal powers that the SPR investigated.[25] Moreover, Heard may well have borrowed the term "superconsciousness" from Myers, who claims that there are "super-conscious operations" occurring within us "which transcend the limitations of ordinary faculties of cognition", and which are not subliminal, i.e. "*below the threshold* but rather *above the upper horizon* of consciousness".[26] Heard seems to be thinking of this spatial metaphor in *The Ascent of Humanity*, when he writes: "We are undoubtedly faced with a very determined, though unformulated, unwillingness to recognize symptoms which would indicate the oncoming of a condition [i.e. superconsciousness] as far above individuality as co-consciousness is below it".[27]

In the late 1920s and early 30s, Heard appears to have been more influenced by psychical research than mysticism, and in *The Ascent of Humanity* and *The Social Substance of Religion* there are no references to Vedanta, yoga, the *Upanishads* or the *Bhagavad Gita*. However, Falby argues that *The Ascent of Humanity* "reflects the influence of Vedanta in general and Vivekananda's *Rāja Yoga* (1922 [the actual date is 1896]) in particular".[28] The most obvious connection between the two texts is Vivekananda's use of the word "superconsciousness" as a scientific-sounding synonym for *samadhi*. It seems likely that Vivekananda derived the term "superconsciousness" from Myers, or at any rate, had heard it second-hand in the cultic milieu of mesmerists, Christian scientists and Theosophists in which he moved while in America;[29] moreover, there seems more than a faint echo of Myers in the following:

> Just as unconscious work is beneath consciousness, so there is another work which is above consciousness, and which also is not accompanied

23 Heard, *Ascent*, 14. See also Falby, *Between the Pigeonholes*, 66. For an explanation of the limen and the sub- and supraliminal minds, see Chapter 2.

24 See Myers, *Human Personality*, 1: 34; italics in original.

25 See ibid., 118–119.

26 F.W.H. Myers, Edmund Gurney and Frank Podmore, *Phantasms of the Living*, 2 vols (London: Trübner, 1886), 2: 285.

27 Heard, *Ascent*, 260.

28 Falby, *Between the Pigeonholes*, 68.

29 For Vivekananda's involvement with the cultic milieu, see De Michelis, *Modern Yoga*, 125.

> with the feeling of egoism. The feeling of egoism is only on the middle plane. When the mind is above or below that line, there is no feeling of "I", and yet the mind works. When the mind goes beyond this line of self-consciousness, it is called *Samâdhi* or superconsciousness.[30]

It should be noted that Heard's use of the term is incompatible with Vivekananda's, since for Heard superconsciousness involves a combination of *self*-consciousness with co-consciousness and a telepathic connection to the impersonal psychic field, whereas for Vivekananda superconsciousness or *samadhi* entails the transcendence of the ego or mind. Falby argues that "like Vivekananda, Heard argued for a collective eschatology in Western psychological terms" and notes that "Vivekananda viewed all individual selves as part of a larger self, or *Atman* in Vedantist terms".[31] But there is a marked difference between the Vedantic godhead *brahman* and Heard's impersonal psychic field, and the "collective eschatology" that Falby mentions – in other words, the incorporation of one's memories into the larger psychic field after death – is not akin to rebirth or *moksha*. Even when, as I shall demonstrate below, Heard broached the subject of yoga directly in *The Source of Civilization*, it had almost nothing in common with Vivekananda's *rāja yoga* (or, for that matter, any other form of yoga).

There are several other more persuasive sources for *The Ascent of Humanity*, and in particular for Heard's tripartite scheme of spiritual evolution. The pacifist, socialist and mystical thinker Edward Carpenter was an early influence on Heard.[32] In 1881, Carpenter underwent a mystical experience he subsequently termed "cosmic consciousness", in which there was a collapse of subject-object duality, a sense of immortality and a feeling of "indescribable calm and joy".[33] Carpenter had been inspired by his reading of the *Bhagavad Gita*, which he had received from an Indian friend, and he subsequently made a trip to Sri Lanka to study with his friend's guru, who was an adherent of the non-dual

30 Swami Vivekananda, *Rāja Yoga: Being Lectures by the Swami Vivekananda with Pātañjali's Aphorisms, Commentaries and a Glossary of Terms* (New York: Brentano's, 1920), 73–74.

31 Falby, *Between the Pigeonholes*, 68.

32 See ibid., 12, 15, 43. Heard may well, as Falby notes, have "privately derided Carpenter for repeating the theses of Walt Whitman and J.A. Symonds", but the fact remains that his evolutionary scheme bears an unmistakable resemblance to that of Carpenter's.

33 See Richard Maurice Bucke, who quotes in full a chapter from Carpenter's book *From Adam's Peak to Elephanta* (1892) in *Cosmic Consciousness: A Study in the Evolution of the Human Mind* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1901), 242–249.

Śaiva religion.[34] In *The Art of Creation* (1904) and other books,[35] Carpenter outlined a three-stage evolutionary scheme: in the first stage, "Simple Consciousness", there is an intuitive or unconscious unity between humans and nature; the next stage is "Self Consciousness", in which humans are alienated from nature by the development of an illusory subject-object dualism; the final stage is "Cosmic Consciousness", in which the self is consciously united with nature and a universal mind, giving rise to infinite knowledge, and an awareness of other people, objects, animals and so forth as being parts of a cosmic whole, united, in Carpenter's words, by "infinite threads of relation".[36] Heard's own evolutionary scheme, then, is clearly indebted to Carpenter's. In addition, Carpenter posits a proto-Jungian "race consciousness", a cross between Plato's Forms and Jung's archetypes *avant la lettre* that falls somewhere between individual consciousness and cosmic consciousness,[37] which may have influenced Heard's notion of the impersonal psychic field.

R.M. Bucke was also influenced by Carpenter, and claimed that he, too, had had an episode of cosmic consciousness (see Chapter 3 for details). Bucke subsequently recognised in the teaching and writings of Christ, the Buddha, Mohammed, Plotinus, Jacob Boehme, Dante, Blake, Whitman, Balzac, Carpenter and others the insights he had gleaned from his experience of cosmic consciousness. Bucke concluded that these titans of religion and literature had all had the same experience as him, and that collectively they represented the evolutionary future of the species. He advanced a threefold evolutionary scheme that is conspicuously similar to Carpenter's: simple consciousness exemplified by "primitive" people and animals; the self-consciousness of civilised human beings; and a permanent state of cosmic consciousness that he and Carpenter had fleetingly enjoyed.[38] It is almost certain, given Heard's voracious reading, that he'd read Bucke's *Cosmic Consciousness* (1901); on the other hand, he does not refer to Bucke in his trilogy.

Another influence from around this time, Falby notes, is the poet Rabindranath Tagore (son of Debendranath Tagore) and the philanthropists Leonard and Dorothy Elmhirst (the latter was the daughter of the American plutocrat William Collins Whitney).[39] Like Heard, Elmhirst read theology at Cambridge University and suffered a crisis of faith that prevented his becoming a

34 See Marshall, *Mystical Encounters*, 119.

35 Namely *Civilisation* (1889), *The Drama of Love and Death* (1912) and *Pagan and Christian Creeds* (1920). See ibid., 120.

36 See Marshall, *Mystical Encounters*, 121–122.

37 See ibid., 125.

38 See Bucke, *Cosmic Consciousness*, 3–4.

39 See Falby, *Between the Pigeonholes*, 68–69.

clergymen like his father. In 1916, he became a missionary for the YMCA and travelled to India, where he was so appalled by the rural poverty that he took a degree in agriculture at Cornell University with the intention of introducing modern techniques and practices in India. It was at Cornell in 1921 that he met Tagore, who made him director of the Institute for Rural Reconstruction at Santiniketan, Bengal, where Tagore had started a university and co-operative community on his family's estate. Elmhirst used his experience of working for Tagore, and in particular helping to organise an experimental boarding school (Siksha-Satra), when he and Dorothy set about establishing their own progressive school on a large estate in Dartington near Totnes, Devon.[40] Elmhirst used his expertise to render Dartington self-sufficient, and introduced several new enterprises, such as "orchards, cider, sawmilling, woodworking, and poultry".[41] Heard had first-hand experience of Horace Plunkett's co-operative schemes in Ireland, which "sought to unite farmers by improving their economic and social relations", thereby fostering "community spirit".[42] Thus Elmhirst's plans for Dartington met with a receptive audience in Heard, who, Eros notes,

> believed that Elmhirst's experiment could potentially form the basis of a psychologically and economically sound way of life: working together in a common task, he felt, provided a model for the correct relationship between individuals in society, uncovering the subconscious ties that bind all individuals, and making inevitable a co-operative economic system.[43]

Dartington Hall School was opened in 1926 and in 1932 Heard began to lecture there on "Current History", the same year that Huxley's son Matthew was enrolled.[44]

The year before, Heard had begun the first of many meditation groups, the Engineers' Study Group, in an attempt to achieve co-consciousness. In her memoirs, Naomi Mitchison quotes the following letter from Heard outlining the aims of the group:

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40 See ibid. and Eros, "Gerald Heard", 119–121, 123.

41 "Elmhirst, Leonard Knight (1893–1974), agricultural economist and philanthropist", *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, accessed March 14, 2018, http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-31072.

42 Eros, "Gerald Heard", 60.

43 Ibid., 125.

44 See ibid., 114. For a detailed analysis of Matthew Huxley's time at Dartington (1932–35), and Huxley's increasing exasperation at the progressive teaching methods that he felt left his son woefully under-educated, see David Bradshaw, "Huxley and Progressive Education: Daltonism and the Dartington Hall Debacle", *Aldous Huxley Annual* 15 (2015): 1–20.

> I want to try one hour a week, twelve, silence, semi-dark. Each, after, sets down comments – but that's simply for later guidance and experiment. Each time a small change might be tried. A collation before one meeting. Complete dark at another. Music at a third.[45]

It is clear from this that Heard was still experimenting with meditation; it is also worth noting that while say Buddhist *vipassana* meditation is often done in groups, the ultimate goal for the individuals who comprise the group is nonetheless the *individual* attainment of *nirvana*, whereas Heard seems to have envisaged a *group* breakthrough into co- or superconsciousness. Suffice it to say, the study group was not a success.[46]

At Dartington, Heard set up another meditation group among the students and staff, with similar aims. In his work from this period, Heard was arguing that religious fellowship provided the best method of achieving co-consciousness, and gives as an example the early Christian *agape*, which in small groups generated an "immense love" capable of transcending the "barriers of [...] individualism".[47] In the *agape*, Heard notes, food was consumed, there was singing and rhythm, all of which seems to have contributed to the group enthusiasm.[48] But it is hard to ascertain what (if any) of these aspects of the *agape* he imported into his group sessions at Dartington. Eros characterises these sessions as attempts at a kind of "psycho-mystical *agape*", but remains vague about the details.[49] In a letter to Dorothy Elmhirst written in September 1932, Heard sets out his aspirations for the group: "as soon as we really get to know each other [...] our confidence in what the Group gives us may grow so strong that we'll even be able to sit recollected and yet relaxed, communicating and yet conversationless in the silence which, through the supreme technique of a group, is I believe quite probably its most powerful means of rechargement".[50] Again, meditation (in terms of Christian recollection) seems to be the key to achieving co-consciousness. But as with the Engineers' Study Group, so with the Dartington group, the telepathic breakthrough Heard hoped for never materialised, and by 1934 it had been disbanded.

In *The Social Substance of Religion*, Heard also posits that in "primitive" religious rites the orgy was used to facilitate "at-one-ment" and co-consciousness.[51]

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45 Naomi Mitchinson, *You May Well Ask: A Memoir 1920–1940* (London: Flamingo, 1986), 114.
46 Ibid.
47 Gerald Heard, *The Social Substance of Religion: An Essay on the Evolution of Religion* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1931), 212. See also Falby, *Pigeonholes*, 79.
48 See Heard, *Social Substance*, 213.
49 See Eros, "Gerald Heard", 114, 141, 144.
50 Quoted in ibid., 161.
51 See Heard, *Social Substance*, 114–116.

Eros argues that this may have inspired the Solidarity Services in *Brave New World* (1932),[52] which are orgiastic substitutes for religion that culminate in "atonement" (which originally, in the sixteenth century, meant the "condition of being *at one* with others" [*OED*]). After the atonement in the Solidarity Service, the group exhibit the "peace, not of mere vacant satiety and nothingness, but of balanced life, of energies at rest and in equilibrium",[53] which echoes Heard's description of the "primitive" man emerging from at-one-ment: "As he passed out of the orgy he went out purified, balanced, at rest".[54]

It is only really now, in 1934, that Heard's interest in Eastern mysticism becomes manifest. Falby notes that in this year Heard read Geraldine Coster's *Yoga and Western Psychology* (1934), *The Secret of the Golden Flower* (1931; a Taoist text translated by Richard Wilhelm with commentary by Jung), *The Way and Its Power* (1934; Arthur Waley's translation of the *Tao Te Ching*), *A Bibliography of Annie Besant* (1934) by Theodore Besterman and *Rāja Yoga* by Vivekananda (which is odd since, as noted above, Falby argues that this text influenced Heard's *Ascent of Humanity*, which was published five years previously).[55] The following year, in *The Source of Civilization*, Heard is representing yoga as a psychological technique to achieve superconsciousness.[56] "The Yogi aims", writes Heard,

> at attaining so direct and clear an apprehension of his extra-individuality that the whole social unit, the whole of humanity and the whole of life is realized as keenly as his self-hood. Further, his method of attaining that, is not by emphasizing and aggravating the other grave fissure, that between body and soul, but by psycho-physical exercises to bring body and soul together, to close the fissure between the vast and unconscious life which directs the body and the little intense conscious life of the individual self, and so [to] bring together again the individual self with its society and with all Life.[57]

This is clearly what Heard wants yoga to be but it flies in the face of *pātañjali yoga*, which, while misrepresented and distorted by Vivekananda,[58] is at

52 See Paul Eros, "'A Sort of Mutt and Jeff': Gerald Heard, Aldous Huxley, and the New Pacifism", *Aldous Huxley Annual* 1 (2001): 101–103 and idem, "Gerald Heard", 208–209.

53 Huxley, *Brave New World*, 74.

54 Heard, *Social Substance*, 114.

55 See Falby, *Pigeonholes*, 62.

56 See ibid., 80.

57 Gerald Heard, *The Source of Civilization* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1935), 230.

58 Vivekananda's book on *rāja yoga*, which is ostensibly based on *pātañjali yoga*, is actually more concerned with *haṭha yoga*. In the latter, the aim is the attainment of liberation in

least accurately outlined in Coster's book *Yoga and Western Psychology*. The final goal described in the *Yoga Sūtras* is *kaivalya*, in which *puruṣa* (soul), far from being united with *prakṛti* (body, world), is irreversibly separated from it. What Heard calls "self" is part of *prakṛti*, and so there can be no question, for the yogi in *kaivalya*, of a simultaneous apprehension of self, social unit and a hypostasised Life. In *The Source of Civilization*, Heard argues that while the civilisations based in ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia collapsed after the emergence of self-consciousness, and the advent of war, monotheism and kings that followed as a consequence, the Indus Valley civilisation survived.[59] This was primarily because they developed a "technique" which allowed the newly self-conscious individual to "make himself race conscious, re-mend the fissure in his own psyche and so see himself and his community, it and Life, and Life and the universe as one".[60] It seems to me that Heard's sudden interest in yoga, meditation and Theosophy in 1934 was because he was searching for this "technique", and settled on yoga as the best fit. And it does not really matter that it bears no resemblance to *pātañjali yoga* or the three paths of yoga (*karma*, *bhakti* and *jñana*) adumbrated by Krishna in the *Bhagavad Gita*, since Heard is referring to ancient "proto-civilizations" that existed long before the first systematic account of yoga appeared in the Katha Upanishad around the third century BCE.[61]

If I'm belabouring Heard's idiosyncratic ideas about what constituted yoga, it is because I want to put pressure on the claim, made by Sybille Bedford (and, following her, David King Dunaway and Dana Sawyer), that it was Heard who introduced Huxley to yoga, in order to be more precise about exactly when Huxley's mystical turn occurred, and whether it was Huxley's long-standing pacifist position that led him to endorse mysticism, or whether his newfound interest in mysticism emboldened him to become actively involved in promoting pacifism.[62] Bedford quotes from a letter Huxley wrote to Robert Nichols, dated January 1935, in which he says he has been treating his insomnia

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the body (*jīvanmukti*), immortality and the acquisition of paranormal powers (*siddhis*), such as telepathy, retrocognition (knowledge of previous lives), invisibility, flight and so forth. Vivekananda is clearly thinking of *haṭha yoga* when he writes that the "Yogi proposes to himself no less a task than to master the whole universe, to control the whole of nature". Vivekananda, *Rāja Yoga*, 11.

59 See Heard, *Source of Civilization*, 162–164 and Falby, *Pigeonholes*, 80–81.

60 Heard, *Source of Civilization*, 20.

61 See David Gordon White, "Yoga, Brief History of an Idea", in *Yoga in Practice*, ed. David Gordon White (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2012), 4.

62 See Bedford, *Aldous Huxley*, 288; Sawyer, *Aldous Huxley*, 92; and Dunaway, *Huxley in Hollywood*, 28.

with "breathing exercises" of the "Yoga sort" (i.e. *prāṇāyāma*, the restraint of the breath, one of the eight limbs of *pātañjali yoga*), "mental concentration" (*dhāraṇā*, the sixth limb) as well as the "attempted elimination of irrelevant thoughts and feelings", which is a preparation for meditation (*dhyāna*, the seventh limb), but Huxley does not say that Heard introduced him to these practices; instead, he writes that Heard has been recommending a book on relaxation by Edmund Jacobson that he has not read, presumably *Progressive Relaxation* (1929) or *You Must Relax* (1934), neither of which has anything to do with yoga.[63] The previous year (July 1934), Huxley had recommended Coster's book on yoga to his brother Julian, but he represented it as a means of self-improvement rather than a soteriological end, and does not say whether Heard encouraged him to read it or vice versa.[64] In December 1934, Huxley recommends *prāṇāyāma* to Bertrand Russell as an effective technique to treat insomnia, but derides the yoga "cosmology".[65] In the same month, Huxley gave a talk on the BBC for their series "The Causes of War", but he essentially rehashes the pacifist arguments he set out in *Beyond the Mexique Bay* (1934) rather than, as he would do later, advocating mysticism as a universal religion to foster peace and unity.[66] Bedford affirms that it was in the summer of 1935 that Huxley began "a kind of non-metaphysical meditation", and adds that "what had started, at Gerald's instigation, as exercises in breathing and mind control had led to this", evidently not realising that in yoga "mind control" is part and parcel of meditation, which he'd been practising since at least January of that year. Moreover, while Heard had his own idiosyncratic notion of yoga and had been attempting to meditate in a group in order to dissolve the limen and achieve co-consciousness, Huxley cleaved more closely to *pātañjali yoga* and meditated (at this stage) by himself; though, as noted above, Huxley's goal at this time was not *samadhi* but a good night's sleep.

In a letter from September 1935, Huxley is still vacillating: "I wish I could see any remedy for the horrors of human beings except religion or could see any religion that we could all believe in".[67] By the end of October, however, Huxley had been persuaded by Heard not only to join Sheppard's inchoate "Peace Movement", but, more significantly, he now hoped that this would be the tip of a spiritual revival. "Aldous Huxley has joined the move[ment]. We have had a

63 See Smith, *Letters*, 389.
64 See ibid., 382.
65 See Sexton, *Selected Letters*, 301.
66 See H.J. Stenning, ed., *The Causes of War* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1935).
67 Smith, *Letters*, 398.

long talk this evening and it has been the culmination of a series", Heard writes to Sheppard on October 31, 1935. Huxley is "convinced", he continues,

> that the issue is [...] "directly spiritual" and he therefore also wants to talk over with you the issue from this point of view and whether this whole movement is not the point and nucleation of a spiritual movement which may revive religion. I am sure he is right. His new novel is to end with that outlook made clear and as a sort of forerunner of what your movement will we believe become. He thinks his novel may be a sort of forecast and prophecy.[68]

It is worth considering, then, what Huxley envisaged for Sheppard's "Peace Movement" in *Eyeless in Gaza*. The doctor and anthropologist James Miller persuades the inveterate sceptic Anthony Beavis to become a committed pacifist who expounds a mystical philosophy of "unity". Heard was indubitably one of the models Huxley drew on for the character of Miller (the others being F.M. Alexander and J.E.R. McDonagh). Through Miller, Beavis is introduced to a Christian parson named Purchas (who was inspired by Sheppard), who has started a pacifist organisation. Beavis writes in his diary:

> The aim is to use and extend Purchas's organization. The unit a small group, like the Early Christian agape, or the communist cell. [...] Purchas's groups preface meetings with Christian devotions. Empirically, it is found that a devotional atmosphere increases efficiency, intensifies spirit of co-operation and self-sacrifice. But devotion in Christian terms will be largely unacceptable. Miller believes possible a non-theological praxis of meditation.[69]

But what Beavis means by meditation seems closer to the Catholic practice of mental prayer than to Heard's group meditations or the yoga meditation Huxley seems to have been practising. In a letter to T.S. Eliot in July 1936, Huxley recommends *The Art of Mental Prayer* (1931) by Father Bede Frost, which includes the many varieties of mental prayer used by Catholic mystics, such as the "spiritual exercises" of St Ignatius Loyola.[70] Mental prayer characteristically begins with a reading from scripture and is followed by a meditation

68 Letters to H.R.L. Sheppard 1908–37, MS 3745, folio 122, Lambeth Palace Library (hereafter LPL).

69 Huxley, *Eyeless*, 16.

70 See Smith, *Letters*, 406.

on its meaning. In *Eyeless in Gaza*, Beavis seems to have adopted this type of discursive meditation. In his diary, he records two of his meditations: the first is on a phrase by the Quaker William Penn: "Force may subdue, but Love gains; and he who forgives first wins the laurel"; and the second is the famous meditation on unity and peace that concludes the novel.[71] On the other hand, what Beavis means by Miller's "non-theological praxis of meditation" is probably closer to Heard's group meditations that from around 1936 he was conducting under the auspices of the PPU (which will be examined below). In contrast to Heard, though, Miller seems to subscribe to a broadly Buddhist philosophy, and glosses meditation as an attempt to merge one's mind "in the universal mind".[72] In his diary, Beavis proposes the compilation of an *Ars Contemplativa*, which would contain meditation techniques from across the religious traditions, so that people could find one to suit their psychological type (this would become one of the aims of Heard's Trabuco College). While Beavis notes that these techniques are "ends in themselves", the emphasis is on using them as "means for realizing […] goodness" in oneself, in order to bring about peace on earth, rather than attaining liberation from *samsara*.[73]

After joining the PPU,[74] Huxley writes to Victoria Ocampo in November 1935:

> I am working at my book and in the interval talking over ways and means, with Gerald, for getting an adequate pacifist movement onto its feet. The thing finally resolves itself into a religious problem – an uncomfortable fact which one must be prepared to face and which I have come during the last year to find it easier to face.[75]

In his first speech as a public pacifist, in December 1935, at the Friends House on the Euston Road (the central offices of the Quakers in Britain), Huxley argued that humanism was uncongenial to pacifism, since advances in science had led many people to reject religion and to worship instead nations and totalitarian leaders. The most propitious "metaphysical environment for pacifism" was belief in a "spiritual reality to which all men have access and in which they are

71 See Huxley, *Eyeless*, 335–336, 409–415.

72 See ibid., 373.

73 Ibid., 380.

74 As noted in Chapter 1, Sheppard's peace movement did not adopt the name Peace Pledge Union until May 1936, but was active before then, and for convenience I shall refer to it as PPU.

75 Smith, *Letters*, 398.

united".[76] In *Eyeless in Gaza*, Beavis uses the same non-denominational language to describe his mystical vision of atomised waves on the surface of the ocean and peace in the depths that expands into the "ground and source of all life, all being".[77] And in turn this mystical unity of man was the "metaphysical environment" for Huxley's manifesto for the PPU, *What Are You Going to Do About It? The Case for Constructive Peace* (1936), which he wrote while putting the finishing touches to his novel. "The Constructive Pacifist", writes Huxley,

> formulates his belief in some such words as these. The spirit is one and all men are potentially at one in the spirit. Any thought or act which denies the fundamental unity of mankind is wrong and, in a sense, false; any thought or act which affirms it is right and true. It is in the power of every individual to choose whether he shall deny or affirm the unity of mankind in an ultimate spiritual reality.[78]

In his speeches, pacifist pamphlets and *Eyeless in Gaza*, Huxley insists that means determine ends, with war leading to more war, rather than peace.[79] Heard may have partly inspired this ends-and-means argument, as Huxley's letter to Ocampo above seems to suggest. In *The Source of Civilization*, under the rubric "The End Does Not Justify the Means", Heard writes: "We have learnt that it is the method we use not the aim we propose which decides the value of our actions and how far its resultant is of worth to humanity". And: "'The ends do not justify the means' we repeat. […] 'The Means determine the Ends'".[80] However, Heard notes that this is "a platitude", and goes on to quote a recent example from *Russia's Iron Age* (1935) by William Chamberlin. F.M. Alexander, from whom Huxley learnt the Alexander technique, also emphasised the importance of the physical means used to achieve various ends (such as speaking, sitting, standing and so on), and in *Eyeless in Gaza* Beavis learns the technique from Miller and appropriates the ends-and-means approach for thinking about pacifism.[81] Furthermore, both Huxley and Heard were influenced by the American pacifist Richard B. Gregg, who discusses ends and means in his book *The Power of Nonviolence* (1935), as does Gandhi (Gregg's hero) in *Hind Swaraj*

76 Aldous Huxley, "Pacifism and Philosophy", in Hetherington, *Pacifism and Philosophy*, 17.
77 Huxley, *Eyeless*, 414.
78 Huxley, *What Are You Going to Do*?, 32.
79 See for example ibid., 10; idem, *Eyeless*, 278; idem, "Pacifism and Philosophy", 10.
80 Heard, *Source of Civilization*, 49, 53.
81 See Huxley, *Eyeless*, 217–218.

(1924). Huxley may also have derived his newfound interest in anthropology from Heard, whose *Ascent of Humanity* was influenced by the work of W.H.R. Rivers, and who, in *The Source of Civilization*, sounds a lot like Miller from *Eyeless in Gaza*: "To-day anthropologists have yet to find a people which cannot be approached and associated with, if a defensive attitude is abandoned and the advance is obviously friendly".[82]

At first, Huxley threw himself into pacifist work, completing *What Are You Going to Do About It?* in March 1936, editing (and largely writing) *The Encyclopaedia of Pacifism* (1937), as well as composing anonymous pacifist pamphlets, such as "Pacifism and Civil War" (1936).[83] Huxley also gave speeches with Heard at peace rallies across the country, despite his aversion to public speaking. In an interview with Laura Huxley, Alan Watts articulates the received idea of Huxley as a public speaker: "when I first met him, he couldn't lecture for love nor money. He used to put his head in a manuscript and mumble"; it was only later in America, Watt continues, when Huxley began to talk without the aid of a manuscript that he became "a fantastic lecturer".[84] In spite of this negative assessment, many were impressed by Huxley's pacifist speeches. For instance, in a letter dated December 4, 1935, Max Plowman writes:

> I wish you had heard Huxley at the Friends M[eeting] H[ouse] yesterday: it really was worth hearing, and the longer he spoke the longer my ears grew! I thought Gerald Heard pretty good, but Huxley was certainly better.[85]

In *What Are You Going to Do About It?*, Huxley advises PPU members to organise themselves into small groups that meet on a weekly basis for discussion and the performance of "spiritual exercises".[86] Robert de Ropp reports attending PPU meditation sessions around this time at Friends House and at Heard's flat in Portland Place, where he met Huxley. "The theory behind the meditations was carefully explained by Gerald Heard", he writes,

> who had worked out the method. There was, so he told us, a definite force which in India was called *satyagraha* (soul force), a force that Gandhi

82 Heard, *Source of Civilization*, 416.

83 See Hetherington, *Pacifism and Philosophy*.

84 From a radio interview with Laura Huxley, recorded in 1968 by the San Francisco Pacifica Radio station KPFA at the home of Alan Watts in Sausalito, CA.

85 D.L. Plowman, ed., *Bridge into the Future: Letters of Max Plowman* (London: Andrew Dakars, 1944), 549.

86 See Huxley, *What Are You Going to Do?*, 31, 34.

> had used with success to further India's progress toward self-rule. The force could be projected toward people who controlled world events. It could be projected toward Hitler. It could be projected toward Mussolini. If enough people projected the force toward them, the dictators would change their wicked ways.[87]

This seems a peculiarly Heardian misconception of *satyagraha* (though it is possible that Ropp is misremembering). The literal translation of *satyagraha*, according to Gandhi, is firmness of truth, and this can only be achieved by the observance of *ahimsa* (non-violence), one of the *yamas* (ethical restraints) of *pātañjali yoga*.[88] In "The Significance of the New Pacifism" (1935), Heard advocates both individual and group meditation, though he provides a nebulous definition of the term that perhaps reflects his own uncertainty ("by meditation is meant the spiritual exercise every sincerely religious mind recognizes as essential to the spirit"); there's no mention of projecting *satyagraha* at dictators, but Heard affirms that group meditation can produce a "precipitated power" that steels its members for pacifist work.[89]

At this time, Heard was under the sway of Richard Gregg, who also advocated group meditation. In *The Power of Nonviolence*, Gregg affirms that group meditation can take two forms, either a more discursive meditation à la Anthony Beavis, in which the participants ruminate on a word or concept, such as "courage" or "the unity of mankind", or Buddhist or yoga meditation in which the participants attempt to still the mind and eliminate thoughts.[90] Initially, the PPU embraced Gregg's ideas, urged its members to form small groups and published a pamphlet by Gregg, *Training for Peace* (1936), which advocated group meditation, communal singing and folk dancing in order to build the discipline and esprit de corps required for the practice of non-violence.[91] But even PPU enthusiasts like Max Plowman (quoted above) began to baulk at the

87 Ropp, *Warrior's Way*, 90–91.

88 See M.K. Gandhi, *An Autobiography* (London: Penguin, 2001), 292, 453.

89 Gerald Heard, "The Significance of the New Pacifism", in *Gerald Heard and Aldous Huxley on Pacifism: Two Addresses* (London: London and Middlesex Quarterly Meeting Peace Committee, 1935), 6.

90 See Richard B. Gregg, *The Power of Nonviolence*, rev. ed. (Canton: Greenleaf Books, 1960), 162–163. Huxley betrays the influence of Gregg in *What Are You Going to Do About It?* when he writes: "It is a matter of empirical experience that regular meditation on, say, courage or peace often helps the meditator to be brave and serene".

91 See Richard B. Gregg, "Training for Peace: A Programme for Peace Workers" (London: Routledge, 1936), 12–13, 15, and Martin Ceadel, *Pacifism in Britain 1914–1945: The Defining of a Faith* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980), 252.

"intensive Study Groups and all [the] Yogi-Bogie exercises".[92] Martin Ceadel quotes a disgruntled member from Bradford who complained that the PPU was being co-opted to "build up a 'precious' doctrine which has as its objective the regeneration of the individual rather than the prevention of war".[93] The point of the spiritual exercises, however, was for the individual to achieve peace on a personal level; only then could one hope for peace on a societal or governmental level. "Nobody but a fool", writes Huxley,

> can suppose that it is possible for a government to behave as a pacifist, when the individuals it represents conduct their private affairs in an essentially militaristic way. Constructive Peace must be first of all a personal ethic, a way of life for individuals; only on that condition will it come to be embodied, permanently and securely, in forms of social and international organization.[94]

Moreover, in an interview with Sheppard, Huxley asserts that while *satyagraha* was effective in South Africa, it failed in India "because [Gandhi's] nonviolent resisters were not sufficiently well trained and resorted to militaristic methods".[95] In order to "be successful", he continues, "pacifists must impose upon themselves a strict self-discipline. Campaigns of non-violence have this in common with military campaigns – that they cannot be won except by trained troops".[96]

Even Sheppard grew exasperated with the "spiritual exercises" advocated by Gregg, Huxley and Heard, and in May 1937 he withdrew Gregg's PPU pamphlet. Meanwhile, the signatories of the Peace Pledge had plateaued at 118,000 in 1936, which was a far cry from the quarter of a million predicted by Sheppard for the end of 1935.[97] And by 1937 Huxley and Heard began to feel that the PPU would never attract the necessary support to make an impact on government policy.[98] Moreover, Huxley's pacifism had attracted the contempt of several writers and critics, which made him feel at loggerheads with the political climate. Cecil Day-Lewis wrote a pamphlet in response to Huxley's PPU manifesto, *We're Not Going to Do NOTHING* (1936), in which he derided

92 Quoted in Ceadel, *Pacifism in Britain*, 253.
93 Ibid.
94 Huxley, *What Are You Going to Do?*, 31.
95 *100,000 Say No! Aldous Huxley and "Dick" Sheppard Talk About Pacifism* (London: Athenaeum Press, 1936), 12–13.
96 Ibid.
97 See Ceadel, *Pacifism in Britain*, 262.
98 See Bedford, *Aldous Huxley*, 336.

Huxley's mystical pacifism and asserted that "we are not at that stage of absolute impotence where there is nothing to be done but while away the time with Mr. Huxley's 'spiritual exercises'".[99] In an open letter printed in the communist *Left Review*, Stephen Spender wrote: "We had to wait for Aldous Huxley to propose that prayer is an exercise for the soul, like an elastic exerciser or a dose of Eno's Fruit Salts".[100] The reception of *Eyeless in Gaza* was also disappointing, with most critics mourning the demise of the sceptical, amusingly cynical Huxley who wrote *Antic Hay* (1923) and *Point Counter Point* (1928), and expressing dismay at the mystical pacifist who had taken his place.[101]

There has been much speculation about why Huxley and Heard left England for the United States in April 1937. Eros maintains that the most cogent explanation comes from a letter that appeared in the *Week-End Review* for November 18, 1933, in which Heard argued that in the face of a government intent on war, British pacifists could "undertake a second Mayflower voyage".[102] On the other hand, Bradshaw emphasises that Huxley did not plan to emigrate at this stage.[103] Bedford suggests that Maria had a "premonition" that they would not come back and quotes a letter from Maria to her sister Jeanne: "Aldous and Gerald really think that the situation is getting worse and worse and that there may be a cataclysm before summer".[104] She writes that Huxley is attempting to find Jeanne a publishing job in America and that if he succeeds, she must come immediately. One of Huxley's reasons for going to America was to organise a pacifist lecture tour with Heard and, at the same time, to look at colleges for his son's university education since Maria was anxious to move Matthew out of harm's way lest he be conscripted to fight in another European war.[105] In an unpublished letter to Jake Zeitlin, who had offered to help Huxley obtain film work in Hollywood, dated December 10, 1937, Huxley asks for news of his film scenario "Success": "I make this enquiry", he writes, "because I am

99 Cecil Day-Lewis in *Aldous Huxley: The Critical Heritage*, ed. Donald Watt (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1975), 274–275.

100 Quoted in Dunaway, *Huxley in Hollywood*, 26. In fact, Huxley had argued that group meditation was an "exercise for the soul", while noting that "Prayer for moral strength and tenacity is in fact quite often answered", but for the communist Spender, meditation and prayer are clearly much of a muchness. See Huxley, *What Are You Going to Do?*, 34.

101 See Watt, *Critical Heritage*, 245–271.

102 Eros, "'A Sort of Mutt and Jeff'", 95.

103 See David Bradshaw, "The Flight from Gaza: Aldous Huxley's Involvement with the Peace Pledge Union in the Context of His Overall Intellectual Development", in *Now More Than Ever: Proceedings of the Aldous Huxley Centenary Symposium*, ed. Bernfried Nugel (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1995), 24.

104 Bedford, *Aldous Huxley*, 339.

105 See Sawyer, *Aldous Huxley*, 101.

anxious to make plans for the New Year. Unless there was some prospect of something happening in relation to the scenario, I should probably go back to Europe when my lecturing is over".[106] Despite the failure of "Success", Huxley was commissioned to write a screenplay for a biopic of Marie Curie the following year. When asked by John Chandos (who was interviewing Huxley for the BBC) why he moved to California, Huxley replied that he "did not intend to stay indefinitely":

> I went first of all to stay with Frieda Lawrence in her ranch in New Mexico, and then went on to California to see some friends there. And I had this idea of going on to India after that. I had a sort of vague invitation to lecture there. But then I found someone who'd help me with my vision, which was rapidly going downhill at the time. And I took this course in visual re-education, which helped me a great deal. And then the war broke out. And then my first wife showed signs of TB, and had to go and live in a very dry climate in the desert. And then I found the climate suited me very well, and the general inertia kept me there.[107]

Whether Huxley and Heard planned to return to England or not, they both decided to relinquish an active role in the PPU. In a letter to Sheppard (October 29, 1937), Heard writes from America that he and Huxley are "not suited to c[ommi]ttee work or addressing public meetings" and that their contribution to the PPU will henceforth take the form of promoting pacifism in their writing, and mentions Huxley's new book *Ends and Means* (1937). In conclusion, he confides:

> I am increasingly realising that I can do nothing for peace or for any form of goodness until I am far better myself. I feel increasingly sure that the spirit is calling one to a life of much more thorough devotion.[108]

Furthermore, while Bedford claims that Huxley "never resigned his sponsorship of the PPU",[109] he did in fact tender his resignation. In the PPU sponsors' meeting of February 7, 1939, a "letter was read from Aldous Huxley wishing to

106 This letter is from the 2009 Aldous Huxley Collection in the Charles E. Young Research Library, UCLA.

107 A transcription of this interview by Sybille Bedford can be found in the Aldous Huxley archive of the Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center, University of Texas, Austin.

108 Letters to H.R.L. Sheppard 1908–37, folio 161, LPL.

109 See Bedford, *Aldous Huxley*, 387. Bedford says that Huxley confirmed his membership of the PPU in a letter from the 1950s, but does not cite it.

resign because of his continued absence abroad. A letter has been sent to him asking him to suspend his decision at any rate till the Annual General Meeting". And at a later sponsors' meeting (March 10, 1939) a "letter from Aldous Huxley was read asking to resign as a Sponsor at the AGM", though it is not clear whether this is the same letter or another letter, nor whether his resignation was eventually accepted.[110]

Once in America, Heard established contact with the Pennsylvanian Quakers and visited the progressive "Black Mountain College in North Carolina in search of a model for a spiritual yet learned community".[111] For the past few years, he had been dreaming of forming some kind of commune; in a letter from 1934, he expresses his desire to go to American and "search for a Lost Horizon [alluding to James Hilton's 1933 novel of that name, which featured the legendary Shangri-La], some place where those people who 'worship God freely' can go and live their lives uncommitted to the evil that seems inherent in our aged civilizations".[112] Another reason for the trip to America was because Heard had inherited a tract of land in Montana from his friend and mentor Horace Plunkett,[113] and he would eventually use the money to set up Trabuco College. In his valedictory letter to Sheppard (quoted above), Heard writes "I am increasingly convinced that what is needed is not merely a political protest but another order and way of living".[114]

Heard would explore this new way of living in his next book, *The Third Morality* (1937). Here he builds on the evolution of consciousness he had expounded in his inter-war trilogy. With the advent of self-consciousness, humans had developed two cosmologies or "moralities": "anthropomorphism" (the idea of the universe as a projection of man) and "mechanomorphism" (the idea of the universe as a machine).[115] As a result of the triumph of mechanomorphism in the West, giant strides had been made in the conquest and exploitation of the outer world, but this had led to an impoverishment of knowledge of the inner world of the psyche, with behavioural psychologists denying the existence of an immaterial mind.[116] Heard argues that recent discoveries in quantum physics have overturned the mechanist paradigm, such as Heisenberg's uncertainty principle. Unfortunately, Heard gets this wrong and asserts that the "speed" and "mass" of an electron cannot be known simultaneously (rather

110 Sponsors' meeting minutes for February 7 and March 10, 1939, Peace Pledge Union archive.
111 Tindall, "Trouble with Aldous Huxley", 457–458.
112 Quoted in Falby, *Pigeonholes*, 92.
113 See ibid. and Bedford, *Aldous Huxley*, 335.
114 Letters to H.R.L. Sheppard 1908–37, folio 161, LPL. See also Falby, *Pigeonholes*, 96.
115 See Gerald Heard, *The Third Morality* (London: Cassell, 1937), 165.
116 See ibid., 114–115, 164.

than the momentum and position of an electron).[117] In light of the uncertainty principle, strict causality, at least on the subatomic scale, has had to be abandoned because the behaviour of electrons can only be statistically predicted en masse;[118] for instance, in the case of the double slit experiment discussed in Chapter 2, it is impossible to predict which of the slits the electron or photon will pass through. All of which leads Heard to proclaim that the universe is "fundamentally immaterial".[119]

The third morality, then, is a cosmology of mind in the manner of Eddington's idealism: "Our present knowledge of reality shows us there is a consciousness around us, similar to, but not the same as, our personalized consciousness".[120] As with Heard's previous work, the purpose of humankind is to make contact with this impersonal universal mind by transcending one's individuality. In order to achieve this, Heard recommends "psychophysical" training, such as employing willpower to direct blood to the feet and hands to prove the interrelation between mind and body, and meditation on the three phases of "enlarged consciousness", namely creativity, understanding (that individuality is an illusion) and compassion, in order to "neutralize those intense aspects of individuality and so make its resolving possible".[121] Heard is clearly still experimenting with techniques, as he himself had never achieved superconsciousness. This training must be performed in "teams", he affirms, sequestered from "society's greed, fear, and passionate individualism", which prevent the spiritual seeker from realising her "extra-individuality".[122] These teams would form self-sufficient anarchist communities and practise what Heard called "intentional living".[123] The "intentional life required not only long meditation periods", writes Christopher Isherwood, "but also an attempted moment-to-moment vigilance over one's every thought and action, since every thought and action helps either to create or to remove the obstacles to union with 'this thing'" ("this thing" was Heard's phrase for the universal mind), the obstacles being "addiction, possessions, and pretensions".[124] The discovery of the "third morality" through "intentional living" would be the ultimate purpose of Trabuco College (examined below).

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117 See ibid., 84.
118 See ibid., 84–86.
119 Ibid., 129.
120 Ibid., 168.
121 See ibid., 256, 258.
122 Ibid., 303.
123 See ibid., 262 and Falby, *Pigeonholes*, 88–89.
124 Christopher Isherwood, *My Guru and His Disciple* (London: Magnum, 1981), 16.

Ends and Means has much in common with *The Third Morality*, but while for Heard in the latter the *end* is the realisation of one's extra-individuality through intentional living and psychophysical exercises, for Huxley at this stage mystical knowledge of "ultimate reality" achieved through meditation and non-attachment is but a *means* to achieve a better, more peaceable society. Huxley notes that since before the start of the common era there has been a remarkable consensus among prophets and philosophers on the "ideal goal of human effort": a civilisation that affords "liberty, peace, justice, and brotherly love"; the disagreements arise on the means required to achieve this utopian end.[125] Huxley's book is presented as a "practical cookery book of reforms" that can help to achieve these ideals, one built on the dictum of *Eyeless in Gaza* and Huxley's pacifist work, namely that good ends can only be obtained by appropriate means. So, for instance, in order to achieve a greater measure of social justice, Huxley advocates not the extermination of the bourgeoisie and the appropriation of the means of production, but the decentralisation of the state's power and self-government, introduced piecemeal by non-violent methods.[126] He cites the work of the French economist Hyacinthe Dubreuil, who recommends that industries be organised into self-governing groups of about 30 members, to whom work is sub-contracted, which, he argues, would produce greater efficiency, equality and pay.[127]

The chapters on religious practices and beliefs only appear at the end of the book. Mysticism is presented as the optimum metaphysical environment for achieving the ideal ends outlined in the first chapter. The Perennial Philosophy is by now exercising an influence on Huxley's thinking, though he does not explicitly refer to it. Instead, he refers to what the "best mystics" (Eckhart, John of the Cross, the author of the *Cloud of Unknowing*, the Buddha, Laozi, Shankara, *inter alia*) have said about the nature of ultimate reality, ethics and mystical experience. The best mystics, then, were able to obtain a "direct experience of a spiritual unity underlying the apparent diversity of independent consciousness".[128] Where second-rate mystics conceived of ultimate reality in terms of "local divinities", the best mystics conceived of it as an "impersonal consciousness".[129] He notes that personal deities are generally regarded as wholly transcendent, which leads to a life-denying attitude: the world is fallen, the body is sinful, salvation lies in a heavenly afterlife. Moreover, personal

125 See Huxley, "Goals, Roads, and Contemporary Starting-point", in *CE* 4: 329.
126 See Aldous Huxley, "Decentralization and Self-government", in *CE* 4: 195–196.
127 See ibid., 198.
128 Huxley, "Beliefs", in *CE* 4: 383.
129 See ibid., 380, 383.

gods exhibit personal (human) vices, such as the hatred, jealousy and wrath of Jehovah in the Old Testament.[130] But the worship of personal deities (or *bhakti-marga*) is inherently satisfying, and with the decline of organised religion, people have increasingly turned their religious fervour on demagogues and deified nation states, whose theologies license the use of violence, war and persecution. The recurring message of the book is that the tree (philosophy, metaphysics, ethics) shall be known by its fruit. Among the best mystics, Huxley notes, there is a striking consensus on ethical first principles. What he calls the "average sensual man", blinded by passion and ignorance, regards himself as an atomised individual, isolated from other people and ultimate reality. "For such beings", writes Huxley,

> the fundamental moral commandment is: You shall realize your unity with all being. But men cannot realize their unity with others and with ultimate reality unless they practise the virtues of love and understanding. Love, compassion and understanding or intelligence – these are the primary virtues in the ethical system.[131]

Like Heard, Huxley advocates the formation of small anarchist associations, but whereas for Heard the goal is to push the evolutionary envelope and realise the third morality, for Huxley the primary purpose is to realise the ideal of peace. It is unrealistic to expect governments, even ostensibly democratic and pacific ones, to pursue peace on a national level, since they "consistently act upon the principles of militarism", and are furthermore unwilling to undertake the necessary steps to ensure peace, such as disarmament, "renunciation of exclusive empires; abandonment of the policy of economic nationalism; determination in all circumstances to use the methods of non-violence".[132] It falls, then, to "associations of individuals" to set themselves the "tasks of establishing peace and a new form of economic and social organization".[133] These associations would ideally imitate the charity and compassion of religious orders, such as the Christian and Buddhist monks who undertook social work in addition to their religious devotions, and would cleave to the principle of "unlimited liability" that was the basis for Friedrich Raiffeisen's co-operative system of agricultural banking.[134] "Individual members should possess nothing and

130 See Huxley, "Religious Practices", in *CE* 4: 349–350.

131 Huxley, "Beliefs", in *CE* 4: 387.

132 Aldous Huxley, "Individual Work for Reform", in *CE* 4: 233.

133 Ibid., 240.

134 See ibid., 235–236. Heard also embraced this principle and uses the phrase "unlimited liability" throughout his work. See for instance Heard, *Third Morality*, 16, 240, 261, 307.

everything", writes Huxley, "nothing as individuals, everything as joint owners of communally held property and communally produced income".[135] Huxley advocates cultivating an attitude of non-attachment to the "things of this world", such as money, possessions and social status, as well as worldly emotions (anger, hatred, lust), since they are obstacles to the realisation of ultimate reality.[136] He also recommends the practice of meditation and recollection (the Christian equivalent of Buddhist mindfulness), which calls for constant awareness and "moral effort".[137] On the one hand, these techniques can help to realise union with ultimate reality; on the other, they help to generate the love, charity and compassion required to realise peace. This latter, more practical (and perhaps more practicable) goal appears to be paramount for Huxley. Even mystical union, for Huxley, should ideally be combined with awareness of the world and others. The best mystics, he notes, achieve a "double consciousness" in which they are simultaneously aware of the world, themselves and ultimate reality. He gives as an example St Teresa, who, when in the "seventh mansion" could be "conscious of the mystical Light while giving her full attention to worldly business".[138] This state is akin to Heard's superconsciousness, in which the individual is aware of herself, her group and the impersonal cosmic mind. It is also worth noting that Huxley affirms that one of the purposes of group meditation is achieving an "intuition of solidarity with one another", which arguably implies Heard's notion of co-consciousness.[139]

In 1939, Heard made contact with Swami Prabhavananda, who was in charge of the Vedanta Society of Southern California.[140] After Vivekananda's death in 1902, Swami Brahmananda became head of the Ramakrishna Order; Prabhavananda was Brahmananda's disciple. In 1923, he was sent by the Ramakrishna Order to be an assistant swami at the San Francisco Vedanta Center and six years later he established the Southern California Center at 1946 Ivar Avenue.[141] It was here that Huxley and Heard began to study with Swami Prabhavananda, since they both appreciated the advantage in receiving formal training in meditation.[142] Unlike Isherwood, though, who was introduced to the Vedanta Center through Heard in July 1939, they never became Prabhavananda's disciples,

135 Huxley, "Individual Work for Reform", in *CE* 4: 236.
136 See Huxley, "Goals, Roads, and Contemporary Starting-point", in *CE* 4: 330–331.
137 See "Beliefs", in *CE* 4: 379.
138 Aldous Huxley, "Ethics", in *CE* 4: 403.
139 Huxley, "Religious Practices", in *CE* 4: 353.
140 See Falby, *Pigeonholes*, 99.
141 See Isherwood, *My Guru*, 33–34.
142 See Sawyer, *Aldous Huxley*, 110.

and were too eclectic to commit themselves to a single philosophy. Isherwood notes that "Aldous and Prabhavananda were temperamentally far apart", for the latter was "strongly devotional", whereas "Aldous was much more akin to his friend Krishnamurti", who, as a former Hindu and Theosophist, "was repelled by devotional religion and its rituals" and "greatly disapproved of the guru-disciple relationship".[143] To illustrate the devotionalism practised under Prabhavananda, Isherwood describes the shrine at the Vedanta Center, which included images of Ramakrishna, Buddha, Christ, Krishna and some lesser Hindu deities. The "shrine really was a shrine", writes Isherwood:

> It contained relics of Ramakrishna, Holy Mother,[144] and some of their disciples, including fragments of bone which had been preserved after their bodies had been cremated. The Hindus, like the Catholics, believe that such relics generate spiritual power which can be communicated to worshipers who expose themselves to it. But this is only half of the process. What the worshipers receive, they must return to the shrine through acts of worship; thereby they "recharge" the shrine, and thus themselves, continually. It was therefore a rule that ritual worship must be performed before the shrine every single day.[145]

At the time, Huxley was attempting to improve his sight by practising the Bates method, and was somewhat sceptical about his studies with Prabhavananda, whereas Heard wholeheartedly embraced the ascetic lifestyle, forswearing meat, fish and alcohol, and meditating for up to six hours a day.[146] Heard had also been celibate since the mid-1930s, and had no problem in adhering to the sexual abstinence required for spiritual progress.[147] This appears to be the start of what Maria Huxley referred to as a "lull" in their friendship.[148] While Heard was financially independent and could devote himself completely to the spiritual life, Huxley had a family to support and had begun to write screenplays for MGM; he and Maria were soon absorbed into Hollywood society and made

143 See Isherwood, *My Guru*, 50.

144 Holy Mother was the wife of Ramakrishna, whom he married to please his mother; his bride, Saradamani Mukhopadhyay, was five years old at the time and when she came of age, Ramakrishna had become a *sanyasi* or ascetic, and therefore the marriage was never consummated. See Isherwood's introduction, *Vedanta for the Western World*, 17–18.

145 Isherwood, *My Guru*, 58.

146 See Sawyer, *Aldous Huxley*, 112.

147 See Falby, *Pigeonholes*, 84.

148 See Bedford, *Aldous Huxley*, 424.

friends with Charlie Chaplin, Paulette Goddard and Greta Garbo.[149] Huxley gently mocked Heard's asceticism: "Aldous says [Heard] has taken up the attitude of 'the Buddhist Party'", Maria writes to her sister,

> meaning that he's become as rigid as if he'd joined the Communist Party … Gerald has become the priest of this "party-religion" and so one may no longer laugh even about his person … He can't see us because he will not leave his house for more than two hours at a time because of his meditations … Meditation takes for him the place of drugs. When it's time he throws us out.[150]

Dunaway detects a trace of "spiritual envy" on Huxley's part, while "Heard may have envied Huxley's ability to move between worlds", namely the social glitter of Hollywood and the sober devotion of the Vedanta Center.[151]

On a theological level, Huxley, unlike Heard, could not approve of Prabhavananda's devotionalism, since worship of a personal god such as Krishna, rather than the impersonal godhead *brahman*, implied a dualism between the human and the divine, whereas the thrust of neo-Advaita was that since human beings were permeated by *brahman*, they too were divine. In fact, Prabhavananda's *bhakti* style of worship was much closer to the Kali worship of Ramakrishna than the neo-Advaita of Vivekananda (see the previous chapter for details). However, Huxley deplored *bhakti marga* and believed that privileging one deity over another was potentially divisive, and strove for mystical knowledge of ultimate reality.[152] Another problem for Huxley was that Heard had begun to present himself as a guru, giving spiritual lectures at the Vedanta Center as well as Baptist and Quaker venues. Huxley interpreted Heard's adoption of the guru role as a sign of hubris,[153] and was dismayed by the sanctimonious attitude that led Heard to break off his association with the Vedanta Society on the grounds that Prabhavananda's lifestyle was insufficiently monastic, complaining that the swami ate meat, smoked cigarettes, drove a car and was pampered by the Vedanta nuns.[154] Isherwood points out that Heard

149 Heard was living with Chris Wood, who was heir to a jam fortune; moreover, he was the main beneficiary of Horace Plunkett's will, and was able to finance Trabuco College by himself. See Falby, *Pigeonholes*, 14, 106.

150 Quoted in Bedford, *Aldous Huxley*, 391.

151 See David King Dunaway, "Literary Correspondence: Aldous Huxley and Gerald Heard", in *Now More Than Ever*, 33.

152 See Sawyer, *Aldous Huxley*, 114.

153 See Bedford, *Aldous Huxley*, 424–425.

154 See Isherwood, *My Guru*, 75.

could be accused of hypocrisy, since he lived with an avowed homosexual (Chris Wood) and enjoyed "invisible wealth in the form of food, lodging, transportation, and other services and goods provided by his friends",[155] not to mention, albeit unbeknown to Isherwood, the money Heard had inherited from Plunkett. Moreover, Isherwood contends that Heard's problems with the Vedanta Center were more personal than theological:

> He recoiled from the women, with their chatter and laughter and bustle because they were lively and vital and he was a life-hater. Although he could justify his attitude philosophically saying that he longed to die in order to be free of space time, there was an extra sourness to some of his remarks which seemed merely dyspeptic. As when, for example, he showed disgust for the human body as such, saying that the penis looks like a bit of loose gut hanging down from the abdomen; the hatred behind the simile was curiously shocking.[156]

In 1941, Heard purchased three hundred acres of land in the hills behind Laguna Beach and commissioned Isherwood's cousin Felix Green to build him a monastery, which was completed in 1942.[157] According to Isherwood, Heard conceived of Trabuco as an undogmatic non-denominational "club for mystics", in which there would be no "masters and disciples".[158] In the Trabuco prospectus, which, according to Jake Zeitlin, was co-authored by Heard and Huxley, it is asserted that:

> The founders do not regard themselves as possessed of any special message or esoteric "revelation". Trabuco begins its work in a spirit of humble and open-minded enquiry. There are no "prophets" among us. We all start from the beginning, bringing nothing but our need for God and our trust in His Grace, without which search for Him is vain.[159]

On the other hand, it is stated that Trabuco aims to become "a modern version of the med[i]aeval university", with students, "masters" to educate the students, and "doctors" to disseminate their teaching to the world. According

155 Ibid., 76.
156 Ibid.
157 See ibid., 96 and Falby, *Pigeonholes*, 106.
158 See Isherwood, *My Guru*, 96.
159 "Trabuco Prospectus", in the 2009 Aldous Huxley Collection of the Charles E. Young Research Library, UCLA.

to Miriam King, a long-term resident at Trabuco, Heard was the self-anointed master:

> Gerald talked during and after every meal, sometimes for hours [...]. These talks in the refectory after meals were fascinating. Persons other than Gerald did not lecture while I was there. Gerald's talks were very informal. The topics were life and spiritual life. He spoke as a guru.[160]

In *Pain, Sex and Time* (1939), Heard commends the hierarchy of the "Collegiate System", comprising students, masters and doctors, and likens these grades to the Indian castes of Vaisyas, Kshatriyas and Brahmins respectively.[161] To these, Heard adds an untouchable or Sudra caste called "routineers".[162] Liberal democracy has proved itself impotent in the face of fascist and communist dictators, Heard maintains, and the only hope for humankind resides in the "emergence" of a new Neo-Brahmin "order of men" who have healed their "psychic fissure" and attained the next stage of evolution, and who will assume the "leadership of mankind".[163] Presumably, Heard hoped that Trabuco would provide a conducive atmosphere to foster this brave new order of Neo-Brahmins, with himself in the spiritual vanguard. Indeed, Eros asserts that in Trabuco College Heard sought to establish "an intellectual and spiritual aristocracy".[164]

It is instructive to compare the aims of Trabuco in the prospectus with accounts of life at Trabuco from former residents. Heard's original intention was to attract students, who, after a certain period of study, would become permanent residents; these adepts would then examine the "enormous mass of existing literature, from many countries and ages, on techniques of prayer, ways of self-integration and methods of psycho-physical development", test these techniques to "determine which [were] the most applicable and convenient", and finally incorporate them into the Trabuco regime.[165] But none of the long-term residents report conducting any kind of research; and the routine at Trabuco appears to have been devised by Heard and was not subject to experiment: meditation from six to seven a.m.; after breakfast (which was eaten in silence) the remainder of the morning was at the residents' disposal until another "sit"

160 Miriam King, "Life at Trabuco", accessed April 16, 2018, https://www.geraldheard.com/writings-and-recollections/2017/8/2/life-at-trabuco.

161 See Gerald Heard, *Pain, Sex and Time: A New Hypothesis for Evolution* (London: Cassell, 1939), 273–274.

162 See ibid., 274.

163 Ibid., 275–276.

164 Eros, "Gerald Heard", 229.

165 See "Trabuco Prospectus".

(a spell of meditation) from half past eleven to half past twelve, followed by lunch; in the afternoons, residents were expected to carry out maintenance and gardening work; at four o'clock tea was served, which was followed by the final sit from five to six; dinner was then served at six thirty.[166] It was hoped that Trabuco would function "as a rest-center for social workers who need to 'recharge' their depleted physical and psychological energies". In addition, it was to be open "to maladjusted younger men and women prepared to submit to a regime whose fixed hours may help them to regain full control of themselves and return to a more integrated life in the world".[167] But this social outreach programme never came to pass.

Heard envisaged the fruits of the research undertaken at Trabuco being published; but the only Trabuco resident to be published was Heard, who bizarrely elected, at this time of spiritual retrenchment, to start writing sci-fi and crime fiction. Nonetheless, some of his spiritual experiments at Trabuco can be found in *Prayers and Meditations* (1949). "These prayers and meditations", writes Heard,

> are traces of an experiment. They are imprints left by an attempt at a group religious life. As such they may yield hints to other seekers. For they grew out of a convergent effort of a number of people to help one another toward a common goal. Group worship gradually precipitates a pattern. Prayer practiced in common creates its own "score". These prayers and meditations evolved. [...] They are present-day renderings of those thoughts and feelings which have been rising in men since they began to reach out to Him who is beyond the senses.[168]

The book can be read, Heard says, as an "impersonal autobiography".[169] For each day of a month, Heard provides two prayers and one meditation, some written by himself, seven meditations by Huxley, one prayer by St Anselm, and one prayer by St Albert. These follow the Christian tradition of mental prayer (discussed above): the first prayer sets the "key" or theme for the day; the discursive meditation "illustrates the theme"; and the final prayer "complete[s] the reflection".[170] Heard's prayers sound Christian but seem to be directed

166 See Franklin Zahn, "Temporary Monk", accessed April 16, 2018, https://www.geraldheard.com/writings-and-recollections/2017/8/2/temporary-monk.

167 See "Trabuco Prospectus".

168 Gerald Heard, *Prayers and Meditations* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 2008), 9.

169 Ibid., 10.

170 See ibid., 13.

more to an impersonal godhead. For instance, here is a stanza from the initial prayer for "Being":

> O God, who art Life and Light and Love, who
> hast given us the life of the body, whereby we
> are living creatures, the light of the understand-
> ing whereby we are human and the love of the
> heart, whereby we may become divine: Grant
> that we, living in Thy divine Nature, learning of
> Thy divine Mind and loving Thy divine kind-
> ness, may be united with Thee and, through Thee,
> with all Thy Creatures.[171]

Heard is speaking here of a mystical union with a monistic godhead that permeates the (creatures of the) phenomenal world, rather than an orthodox communion with God in heaven. This reading is reinforced by Huxley's meditation on being that follows Heard's prayer: "God is", he writes. "The final end and purpose of every human being is the unitive knowledge of God's being".[172] This is the immanent and transcendent God of the mystics, though, of John of the Cross and Meister Eckhart. To this end, Huxley gives an esoteric interpretation of the Lord's Prayer: "'Our Father which *art* in heaven.' God is, and is ours – immanent in each sentient being".[173] At the same time, "God is also the transcendent Creator and Law-giver"; He is "in heaven", meaning that "He possesses a mode of existence that is incommensurable and incompatible with the mode of existence possessed by human beings in their natural, unspiritualized condition".[174] Huxley also emphasises the necessity of effacing the ego in order to know God mystically: "God's kingdom cannot come unless we begin by making our human kingdoms go".[175] It is hard to be certain, though, whether Huxley wrote his meditations specifically to accompany Heard's prayers, since they first appeared in the Hollywood Vedanta journal *Vedanta and the West* in 1943.

In a letter to Grace Hubble, Maria Huxley likens the atmosphere at Trabuco, not to a cloister, but to "an English country house party", and opines that it

171 Ibid., 20.
172 Ibid., 21.
173 Ibid.
174 Ibid.
175 Ibid., 22.

would furnish the material for a good novel in the manner of *Crome Yellow*.[176] The lifestyle at Trabuco – "three ample meals a day plus fairly high 'tea'" – was not monastic enough for some residents, such as Swami Yogeshananda, who used it as a pretext for his departure. The underlying reason, however, was that he had come to doubt that Heard was enlightened, as his noviciates assumed:

> six months earlier I had met a swami from the Ramakrishna Order in Philadelphia, Swami Yatiswarananda. Without casting any aspersions on Gerald, whose recently published book, *A Preface to Prayer*, he had read, the Swami hinted there was more to be learned about prayer, and the Swami knew what it was. Reluctantly, because it was such an attractive and beautiful environment, I reached the conclusion that my spiritual life needed the more specialized and austere direction about which the Swami hinted, and I could no longer remain at Trabuco.[177]

Furthermore, if Heard had secretly hoped that Trabuco might confer on him the extra-individuality that would enable him to conceive of the third morality or to become a Neo-Brahmin, he was to be disappointed.

Heard's initial rush of enthusiasm for Trabuco was short-lived. Maria, writing to Rosalind Rajagopal after a short stay in April 1943, reports that Heard "is very, profoundly, sad".[178] Though the precise cause of his sadness is uncertain, Heard was distressed around this time by the marriage of Felix Greene and another resident, Elena Lindeman, one of Heard's best students. According to Franklin Zahn, they "left under unhappy circumstances, going to Ojai to be associated with Krishnamurti".[179] While women were allowed at Trabuco, Heard insisted on celibacy for the residents. "When married couples visited each other", Zahn writes, "they were permitted to sleep together only in a detached building".[180]

176 Letter from Maria Huxley to Grace Hubble (Jan. 9, 1944), in the Hubble Collection, HUB674, Huntington Library, San Marino. In another letter to Grace Hubble, Anita Loos reports that the son-in-law of Ellin Berlin (the wife of Irving Berlin), has written a novel about Trabuco, though she does not know if it will be published.

177 Swami Yogeshananda, "Trabuco College Tryout", accessed April 16, 2018, https://www.geraldheard.com/writings-and-recollections/2017/8/2/trabuco-college-tryout.

178 Bedford, *Aldous Huxley*, 423.

179 Zahn, "Temporary Monk". The fact that they shifted their allegiance to Krishnamurti must have rankled with Heard, since he may well have felt envious of Huxley's relationship with Krishnamurti (which will be dealt with below). Moreover, Krishnamurti came to Trabuco at Heard's invitation, but was disturbed by the "chaotic, violent thoughts of the other guests" in the "darkened meditation hall" and declined to visit again. See Pupul Jayakar, *Krishnamurti: A Biography* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1986), 89.

180 Zahn, "Temporary Monk".

Lawrence Veysey maintains that "Heard's homoerotic inclinations, which he had never fully accepted in himself, gave him a strong revulsion against sex of any kind"; and that he found the presence of women at Trabuco disconcerting: "Heard found it an enormous strain to play the role of spiritual teacher to the sex whose presence he could sometimes hardly bear".[181] On the other hand, Heard had several female friends, including Maria Huxley, some of whom were residents at Trabuco, such as the poet and actress Iris Tree (a contributor to *Wheels* whom Huxley had first met at the Eiffel Tower restaurant in London), and two of Trabuco's most loyal residents were women, namely Miriam King and the New York actress Margaret Gage.[182]

There are several different opinions about why Trabuco closed. In his online biography, J.M. Barrie (a long-term Trabuco resident who subsequently became Heard's secretary and platonic life partner) writes that by 1947 there were not enough residents to maintain the three hundred-acre estate, thereby forcing Heard to close it.[183] Heard had envisaged a co-operative, self-sufficient community at Trabuco along the lines of Tagore's Santiniketan estate in Bengal and Elmhirst's school at Dartington, as a complement to their psycho-spiritual development, but he lacked the manpower to sustain it. William Forthman, a Trabuco resident, asserts that Heard abandoned Trabuco because it was not producing the "spiritual outcomes he had hoped for" and that he regarded this as a "failure".[184] Heard was "unable to handle the role of guru smoothly or with full assurance", claims Veysey:

> Ever since boyhood he had lacked something crucial in terms of self-acceptance. Now he seemed awkwardly torn, wanting to function as teacher and spiritual counsellor, yet shrinking continually from the human contact and direct assertion of authority which would have made it possible. He was only intermittently at ease with people. There was an aloof shyness in his make-up, a tendency to retreat into isolation, which suggested that he was fundamentally ill-suited to group living. His

181 Laurence Veysey, *The Communal Experience: Anarchist and Mystical Communities in Twentieth-Century America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), 271–272.

182 See King, "Life at Trabuco", and for Tree's presence at Trabuco, see Bedford, *Aldous Huxley*, 425.

183 Jay Michael Barrie, "Trabuco College", accessed April 24, 2018, https://www.geraldheard.com/blog/2017/7/22/trabuco.

184 William Forthman, "Memories of Gerald Heard", accessed April 17, 2018, https://www.geraldheard.com/writings-and-recollections/2017/8/1/memories-of-gerald-heard.

> own emotional conflicts also lay too near the surface, creating a tone of tension.[185]

Lacking the cogent leadership of the Vedanta swamis, Veysey concludes, Trabuco fell apart. In a letter to Margaret Isherwood (one of the teachers at Dartington Hall) in 1948, Leonard Elmhirst blames Trabuco's failure on Heard's lack of leadership and an unwillingness to vet the residents for spiritual aptitude:

> Several had but the dimmest idea of what to do with their minds in the 3 daily meditation periods & G. was too remote to approach for guidance. In short, he was not in communication with the apostles – save for a very few.[186]

Maria writes to her son that "Gerald has said that God's will was to end Trabuco and Trabuco ended".[187] There is "no doubt", she continues,

> that Gerald really made a mess of the whole thing, chiefly by having favourites and then dropping them to take up another and so often making the dropped favourite despair of everything and leave Trabuco and God; forgetting that God and Gerald were not the same thing. [...] It transpired that Gerald was even more of an autocrat than we had thought: and more self-satisfied too.[188]

Huxley visited Trabuco six times between 1942 and 1943.[189] After his first visit, Maria writes that he is "delighted" with the place and reports that the "split" between Huxley and Heard has been healed.[190] Bedford argues that while their friendship persisted till Huxley's death, it never regained its pre-war empathy and intensity.[191] Falby disputes this claim and maintains that Huxley and Heard resumed their old symbiosis of ideas until the end of the 1940s, affirming that Heard and his residents at Trabuco "allegedly helped Huxley to

185 Veysey, *Communal Experience*, 272.
186 Quoted in Eros, "Gerald Heard", 237.
187 Bedford, *Aldous Huxley*, 463.
188 Ibid.
189 See Falby, *Pigeonholes*, 109.
190 See Bedford, *Aldous Huxley*, 414. This would seem to indicate that the *froideur* between Huxley and Heard was healed by 1942, rather than, as Dunaway suggests, "late 1947 or early 1948" (Dunaway, "Literary Correspondence", 41).
191 See Bedford, *Aldous Huxley*, 425.

unearth quotations" for *The Perennial Philosophy* (1945).[192] Huxley first mentioned the idea of the anthology in a letter to his brother Julian in 1942,[193] so this is at least possible, but he did not start collecting materials for the book until 1944. Falby also cites David Izzo as noting that Heard published an essay entitled "The Philosophia Perennis",[194] which appeared in *Vedanta and the West* in 1943, but this essay relies heavily on the work of the Traditionalist Ananda Coomaraswamy and concludes that "All roads lead to God", whereas, as I indicated in the previous chapter, Huxley's Perennial Philosophy cannot be conflated with this type of universalism.[195] A better example of collaboration would seem to be Heard's *Prayers and Meditations*, although, as noted above, it is possible that Huxley wrote his "Seven Meditations" for *Vedanta and the West* rather than specially for use at Trabuco.

Falby claims that Heard's book *A Preface to Prayer* (1944) is a "companion" to *The Perennial Philosophy*,[196] whereas *The Eternal Gospel* (1946) would seem to be a better candidate. The "eternal gospel" is Heard's term for the Perennial Philosophy, but contains characteristically Heardian elements that are incompatible with it. The phrase "eternal gospel" derives from Revelations 14:6 ("Then I saw another angel flying in midheaven, with an eternal gospel to proclaim to those who live on the earth – to every nation and tribe and language and people" [NRSV]), and has erroneously come to be associated with Joachim de Fiore. The latter was a twelfth-century Italian mystic who had prophesied three ages, that of the Father (associated with Jehovah, the Ten Commandments, the Old Testament), the Son (associated with Jesus, his gospel, the New Testament) and the Holy Spirit (a golden age of freedom and spirituality). Each age was supposed to last 1,260 years, with the Age of the Son commencing with the birth of Christ. On the eve of the Age of the Holy Spirit, in 1254, one of Joachim's followers, Gerard of Borgo San Donnino, proclaimed that the Old and New Testaments had now been superseded by a Third Testament or Eternal Gospel, though this was not something that Joachim had endorsed.[197] Heard maps his tripartite evolution of consciousness onto Joachim's ages: "Man begins in an implicit tradition, an unwritten Law, an atmosphere

192 See Falby, *Pigeonholes*, 110. Falby cites George Woodcock, *Dawn and the Darkest Hour: A Study of Aldous Huxley* (London: Faber and Faber, 1972), 239, for this claim.

193 See Smith, *Letters*, 483.

194 See Falby, *Pigeonholes*, 110 and Izzo, "'Dear Gerald'", *Aldous Huxley Annual* 1 (2001), 70.

195 See Gerald Heard, "The Philosophia Perennis", in *Vedanta for the Western World*, 297.

196 See Falby, *Pigeonholes*, 110.

197 See Warwick Gould and Marjorie Reeves, *Joachim of Fiore and the Myth of the Eternal Evangel in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, rev. ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2001), 8–9.

of social suggestion", i.e. co-consciousness or what Heard is now referring to as "detached consciousness"; "he passes into a middle term of analytic, specifically rational and individualized knowledge" (self-consciousness); and "he finally emerges into a state of intuitional thought, direct apprehension", in other words superconsciousness, the third morality.[198]

"The Eternal Gospel", he asserts, "has always been known to mankind".[199] It is the "common denominator and working factor in all the great religions", namely Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism and Taoism.[200] This "common highest factor may be found present in the three aspects of a religion, viz., its cosmology, the ethic it deduces from that cosmology and the psychology which this ethic and cosmology are found to indicate".[201] Heard's cosmology ("High Animism" or "Atmanism") rejects polytheism and posits an impersonal "Lawgiver".[202] The twin ethics he derives from it are "Sacramentalism" and "Charitism".[203] The former is a "dynamic asceticism" that neither denies life nor affirms it as an end in itself; it regards the body and worldly experience as "necessary means to that growth of the spirit, that evolution of consciousness, which is our *raison d'être* in this space-time world".[204] Charitism is more than alms-giving; it is "an attitude toward all other creatures, an attitude which intellectually, emotionally and volitionally recognizes the neighbour in oneself".[205] The psychology of the Eternal Gospel is the belief that consciousness evolves. The evolution of one's consciousness must be actively pursued by the individual. At first, it is identified with the body but by and by it can move beyond that and arrogate "larger unperceived apprehensions" (presumably from some sort of cosmic mind).[206] The Eternal Gospel, Heard affirms, can be summarised in two commandments: "unlimited devotion to the supreme Reality and […] the determination of the creative will to regard all creatures as children of that All-Father".[207] The chief difference, then, between Huxley's Perennial Philosophy and the "eternal gospel" is Heard's insistence that consciousness is poised on the brink of a great evolutionary leap forward.

198 Gerald Heard, *The Eternal Gospel* (London: Cassell, 1948), 7.
199 Ibid., 6–7.
200 Ibid., 7.
201 Ibid., 9.
202 Ibid.
203 Ibid., 11.
204 Ibid., 14.
205 Ibid., 15–16.
206 Ibid., 17–18.
207 Ibid., 18.

The last book that Huxley wrote that bears the imprint of Heard's influence is *After Many a Summer*. In a deleted portion of the *Paris Review* interview with George Wickes and Ray Frazer, Huxley admitted: "Propter does resemble Gerald in some ways".[208] Eros argues that Propter's commune of migrant workers, which at least aims at self-sufficiency and economic co-operation, is inspired by Heard's anarchist ideas. But Propter's commune is a far cry, *pace* Eros, from the close-knit groups of pacifists Heard envisaged, in "The Significance of the New Pacifism", living a life of "unlimited liability with their companions" in order to overthrow the bondage of individualism.[209] Propter's peons share work and resources but there's no group meditation, prayer, singing and so forth. While he was working on the novel, Huxley paid a visit to Ralph Borsodi's "School of Living" in Rockland County, New York, to investigate the practical application of "ideas about decentralization and small-scale production", indicating that he was not solely influenced by Heard's thinking on the subject.[210]

On the other hand, Propter's mystical philosophy, which equates good with eternity and evil with time, is reminiscent of Heard's. Good can only be achieved, Propter argues, on the animal level and on the level of eternity. On the animal level, it takes the form of the "proper functioning of the organism", and on the level of eternity it manifests as freedom from desire and aversion, "transcendence of personality, the extension of consciousness beyond the limits imposed by the ego".[211] But most humans are obsessed with time and are consequently subject to craving, fear and anxiety, all of which undermine the proper functioning of the organism and result in diseases such as ulcers, high blood-pressure, heart disease, tuberculosis, etc.; humans are also obsessed with their personalities, which prevents them from experiencing eternity, which calls for the transcendence of the ego, and are thus blind to the "true nature of the world".[212] Hence even the most idealistic politicians and philanthropists, trapped on the "strictly human level of time and craving" are unable to "achieve anything but evil"; the best reforms merely deflect "evil from old channels into new and slightly different channels".[213] Propter's association

208 See box 4, 2009 Aldous Huxley Collection in Charles E. Young Research Library, UCLA. Huxley's emendations of the transcript largely arose from considerations of tact: for instance, he goes on to say that Propter is "a more massive figure" than Heard, who "is in rather precarious balance", perhaps alluding to his recurrent bouts of depression.

209 See Eros, "Gerald Heard", 227.

210 See Smith, *Letters*, 434. See also Dunaway, *Huxley in Hollywood*, 131n308.

211 Huxley, *Summer*, 119.

212 See ibid., 119–120.

213 Ibid., 118.

of evil with time and good with eternity, either in the form of animal grace or the mystic's transcendence of personality, can be mapped onto Heard's philosophy that associates evil with human self-consciousness and good with animal or "primitive" human co-consciousness and mystic superconsciousness.[214]

In the novel, the ageing tycoon Jo Stoyte, who employs Dr Obispo to find an elixir of life, is emblematic of the man trapped on the strictly human level of time and personality. Stoyte's Beverly Pantheon, "the personality cemetery", is a gaudy Hollywood version of immortality, festooned with statues of "exuberantly nubile" women, and representing the victory not of the "spirit but of the body, the well-fed body, for ever youthful, immortally athletic, indefatigably sexy".[215] The novel's title is taken from Tennyson's poem "Tithonus", the mortal who petitions his divine lover Eos for eternal life but forgets to stipulate eternal youth, and suffers a deathless decrepitude. Stoyte and Obispo, in their quest for immortality, track down the Fifth Earl of Gonister, who is now 201 years old, and has kept himself and his housekeeper alive by consuming raw carp guts; in the process, he has morphed into a "foetal ape that has had time to grow up".[216] This is not so much a regression from man to ape as a long-delayed maturation of man to ape. The idea behind this bizarre transformation is neoteny, which J.B.S. Haldane defines as the "preservation, in the adult stage, of what were embryonic characters in the ancestor".[217] The adult human resembles the young or embryonic ape, who has a large head (in relation to its body), flat face and relatively short arms and legs. A mutation occurs, Pete Boone (Obispo's assistant) tells Propter, that "retard[s] the development rate. You grow up; but you do it so slowly that you're dead before you've stopped being like your great-great-grandfather's foetus".[218] The Fifth Earl, due to his great age, has had time to develop simian features, such as the "ridge above the eyes", the "curious distortions of the lower jaws, the accretions of bone in front of the ears".[219]

Eros maintains that Heard's influence can be felt in the fate of the Fifth Earl, and quotes the following from *The Ascent of Humanity*: "the individual is not

214 See Smith, *Letters*, 449.

215 Huxley, *Summer*, 11, 14.

216 Ibid., 311.

217 J.B.S. Haldane, *The Causes of Evolution* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1990), 15. Peter Firchow implies that Huxley got the idea of human neoteny from Haldane, but Julian Huxley also wrote about neoteny. See Firchow, "Science and Conscience", 307n17.

218 Huxley, *Summer*, 102. See also Daniel Aureliano Newman, "'Education of an Amphibian': Anachrony, Neoteny, and *Bildung* in Huxley's *Eyeless in Gaza*", *Twentieth Century Literature* 62, no. 4 (2016): 415.

219 Huxley, *Summer*, 312.

solved by being made immortal. He remains, as the myth of Tithonus foreshadowed, a problem of arrested development".[220] For Heard, Eros notes, those species that did not evolve ran the risk of degeneration. This was the case, Heard pointed out in *The Source of Civilization*, with the dinosaurs, who entered an evolutionary dead end of overspecialisation and became extinct. In order to avoid this fate, Heard urged his fellow humans to evolve beyond the present internecine stage of self-consciousness into superconsciousness.[221] However, Huxley does not present Propter as an evolutionary *Übermensch* but as an old-fashioned mystic. Indeed, Propter affirms that it is possible to experience eternity "[n]ot by evolutionary growth, not in some remote future, but at any time – here and now, if you like – by the use of properly directed intelligence and good-will".[222]

The crucial difference between Propter and Heard is that whereas the former's spiritual authority derives from his mystical identity with ultimate reality, the latter had to rely on his mundane knowledge of religious texts. Propter is first glimpsed seated beneath a eucalyptus tree, which may be a Californian substitute for the bodhi tree (which are not native to America), beneath which the Gautama Buddha achieved enlightenment or *bodhi*. Here Propter is practising mental prayer: he takes as his text Cardinal Bérulle's definition of man ("A nothingness surrounded by God, indigent and capable of God, filled with God if he so desires") and John Tauler's definition of God ("God is a being withdrawn from creatures, a nothingness capable of free power, filled with a pure working").[223] He becomes distracted and muses on the events of the day before "recollect[ing] himself", in the Christian sense of the word, and beginning a discursive meditation on the quotations from Tauler and Bérulle, which segues into contemplation and mystical union, which Huxley rather awkwardly describes in the following way:

> But that which surrounded the words was the awareness itself; for this vigilance which was now an effortless awareness – what was it but an aspect, a partial expression, of that impersonal and untroubled consciousness into which the words had been dropped and through which they were slowly sinking? And as they sank they took a new significance for the awareness that was following them down into the depths of itself – a significance new not in respect to the entities connoted by the words,

220 Quoted in Eros, "Gerald Heard", 222.
221 See ibid., 223.
222 Huxley, *Summer*, 245.
223 Ibid., 90.

> but rather in the mode of their comprehension, which, from being intellectual in character, had become intuitive and direct, so that the nature of man in his potentiality and of God in actuality were realized by an analogue of sensuous experience, by a kind of unmediated participation.
>
> The busy nothingness of his being experienced itself as transcended in the felt capacity for peace and purity, for the withdrawal from revulsion and desires, for the blissful freedom from personality.[224]

As a bona fide mystic, Propter dismisses the work of the "professional psychologists who have written about mysticism" since their opinions derive from mystical texts rather than first-hand experience.[225] Huxley's chief objection to Heard assuming the role of guru was that, despite his ascetic lifestyle and unremitting meditation practice, he only knew the literature of mysticism. Isherwood reports that Heard "got nothing out of his formal meditations except distractions and the willpower to force himself to meditate".[226] It was doubtless with this in mind that Huxley turned to another spiritual authority, Jiddu Krishnamurti, who, unlike Heard, had experienced mystical union. Indeed, Huxley's burgeoning friendship with Krishnamurti was probably one of the unspoken causes of the "lull" with Heard.

Jiddu Krishnamurti (1895–1986)

Mary Lutyens implies that it was through Heard that Huxley first met Krishnamurti in April 1938.[227] In fact, it was Huxley who approached Krishnamurti; in an unpublished letter (dated September 16, 1937) to his editor, Desikachar Rajagopal, he writes:

> My friend, Mr Barthélemy de Ligt,[228] wrote to me recently suggesting that I should take part, along with my friend Gerald Heard, in a conference next May, in Holland, with Mr Krishnamurti [...] I should greatly appreciate an opportunity of seeing Mr Krishnamurti. We expect to be going to Ojai early next week – the 21st or the 22nd – and I am writing to you to

224 Ibid., 100.
225 Ibid., 165.
226 Christopher Isherwood, *Diaries, Volume One: 1939–1960*, ed. Katherine Bucknell (London: Methuen, 1996), 746.
227 See Mary Lutyens, *Krishnamurti: The Years of Fulfilment* (John Murray: London, 1983), 45.
228 The Dutch pacifist author of *The Conquest of Violence* (1937), for which Huxley had written an introduction.

> ask whether Mr Krishnamurti is back there and, if so, whether it would be possible for him to receive us.[229]

At that time, however, Krishnamurti was on the East Coast in Sarobia, but he wrote back expressing his eagerness to meet Huxley and Heard. They also had a mutual friend in Frieda Lawrence; not long after the Huxleys had left Frieda's ranch in San Cristobal, Krishnamurti, Rajagopal, his American wife Rosalind and their daughter Radha came to stay. After they returned to California (in the autumn of 1937), Radha Rajagopal Sloss writes that "we met Aldous and Maria Huxley, who were renting a small apartment near my grandmother's Gower Street house".[230] By "we" Sloss presumably means her mother and herself, since Krishnamurti did not meet Huxley till the following year. Maria and Rosalind had much in common: Huxley's wife "fully understood the complications of life with a 'great man'. She admired Rosalind's skills and practicality and there was soon much sharing and pooling of their respective abilities".[231] Due to an attack of bronchial pneumonia, Huxley was unable to accompany Heard when he visited Krishnamurti in February 1938. Two months later, however, Krishnamurti and Rajagopal visited Huxley at his home on North Laurel Avenue. "Gerald Heard was also there", Krishnamurti writes.

> We liked them both very much. Of course Huxley is what is called an intellectual but I don't think he's merely that. We talked about almost everything – the difficulty of communication with propaganda, how people are mucking about with their minds, how difficult it is to create or form a group without vested interests, Yoga etc.[232]

Although at the time Krishnamurti was a respected sage in his own right, he had been launched on the world's spiritual stage by the Theosophical Society (TS). His relationship with the Theosophists affords a valuable insight into his subsequent philosophy, and is thus worth examining in some detail.

In the spring of 1909, Krishnamurti was discovered while playing on the beach at Adyar, in India, by the prominent Theosophist C.W. Leadbeater, who

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229 Letter from Huxley to Rajagopal (Sept. 10, 1937), in the Rajagopal Collection at the Huntington Library, San Marino, CA.

230 Radha Rajagopal Sloss, *Lives in the Shadow with J. Krishnamurti* (London: Bloomsbury, 1991), 153.

231 Ibid.

232 Krishnamurti's letters to Emily Lutyens can be found in the Krishnamurti Archive of the Krishnamurti Centre, Brockwood Park, Bramdean, Hampshire. This letter also appears in Lutyens, *Years of Fulfilment*, 46.

claimed to be clairvoyant, and who was struck by Krishnamurti's singular aura. A few days later, Leadbeater placed his hands on Krishnamurti's head and began to describe his previous incarnations. Shortly after this session, he announced that Krishnamurti was the vehicle for the coming incarnation of the World Teacher, the Lord Maitreya, and that the Theosophical Master Koot Hoomi had instructed him to prepare the boy for this purpose.[233]

Before becoming a Theosophist, Leadbeater had been an Anglican clergyman with an interest in spiritualism. He had joined the TS in 1883 after reading *The Occult World* (1881) by A.P. Sinnett.[234] With Blavatsky's help, Leadbeater was able to make contact with the Masters, but after Blavatsky returned to Europe in the aftermath of the Coulomb scandal,[235] leaving Leadbeater to his own devices at the Theosophical HQ in Adyar, India, he was denied access to them. It was not long, however, before Koot Hoomi began to appear to him in person, and helped Leadbeater to cultivate his latent clairvoyant powers.[236] Hitherto, Blavatsky had mediated contact between the Masters and fellow Theosophists; Leadbeater now asserted that he could communicate with them at will on the astral plane, and therefore no longer needed Blavatsky to mediate. Blavatsky resented this presumption and only deigned to see him once after his return to London in 1889. Mindful that her health was failing, Blavatsky had been grooming Annie Besant to succeed her as head of the elite Esoteric Section of the TS. Leadbeater shrewdly befriended Besant and, as a result of his esoteric tutelage, Besant conveniently developed clairvoyance overnight. This led to their joint investigation of the previous incarnations of fellow Theosophists,

233 See Mary Lutyens, *The Life and Death of Krishnamurti* (Brockwood Park: Krishnamurti Foundation Trust, 2003), 7–8. According to Blavatsky, the Masters were human beings possessed of occult powers, such as telepathy and astral travel, whom she had visited and studied under in Tibet, and who were responsible for shepherding humanity through the evolutionary cycle, culminating, after billions of years, in reunion with the Absolute.

234 See Gregory Tillett, *Elder Brother: A Biography of Charles Webster Leadbeater* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1982), 26.

235 This refers to the publication of letters from Blavatsky to her housekeeper Emma Coulomb, which direct her and her husband to fabricate some of the miraculous incidents Sinnett breathlessly describes in *The Occult World*, as well as to "precipitate" some of the Masters' letters to Theosophists through cracks in the ceiling and so on. Richard Hodgson, on behalf of the SPR, dismissed the precipitated letters and Master-related incidents as fraudulent, and concluded that Blavatsky "has achieved a title to permanent remembrance as one of the most accomplished, ingenious, and interesting impostors of history", in his "Report of the Committee appointed to Investigate Phenomena Connected with the Theosophical Society", *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research* 3 (1885): 207.

236 See Tillett, *Elder Brother*, 46–47.

clairvoyant analyses of the atom, astral travel into the past to the continents of Atlantis and Lemuria.[237]

After Blavatsky's death in 1891, the numerous books and articles authored by Leadbeater and Besant formed the main Theosophical syllabus. Together they effected key changes in Theosophy that led to their doctrines being pejoratively labelled "Neo-Theosophy", and resulted in the formation of several back-to-Blavatsky schisms and protests.[238] One of the most notable aspects of Neo-Theosophy was the insistence on the coming of the Theosophical messiah, the Lord Maitreya. In conventional Buddhism, the Maitreya is the next Buddha, whose coming is predicted when the *dharma* of the previous Buddha, Siddhartha Gautama, is forgotten. In *The Secret Doctrine*, Blavatsky conflates the Maitreya Buddha with Kalki, the final avatar of Vishnu. The idea of an imminent incarnation of the Lord Maitreya contradicts Blavatsky's teaching, as she maintained that the Maitreya Buddha would not manifest in the Kali Yuga, which at the end of the nineteenth century had another 427,000 years to run.[239] In a "Preliminary Memorandum" for the Esoteric Section of the TS, Blavatsky affirms that any sort of spiritual advancement after December 31, 1899, will be impossible. "No Master of Wisdom from the East", she adds, "will himself appear or send any one to Europe or America after that period, and the sluggards will have to renounce every chance of advancement in their present incarnation – until the year 1975".[240] She notes that the first 5,000 years of the Kali Yuga will expire in 1897, and this seems to be linked to the embargo on spiritual progress after 1899. In *The Trembling of the Veil*, Yeats recalls a "secretary" from the TS (possibly Blavatsky's secretary G.R.S. Mead) informing him that "all spiritual influx into the society will end in 1897 for exactly one hundred years".[241] Yeats finds this curious and concludes that it possibly arose from

237 For a more detailed account of their work, see Poller, "'Under a glamour'".

238 See ibid. and James A. Santucci, "The Aquarian Foundation", *Communal Societies* 9 (1989): 43–44.

239 See Blavatsky, *Secret Doctrine*, 1: 412, 510. In Hindu scripture, there are four ages or yugas, starting with the idyllic Satya Yuga (a sort of Hindu Golden Age) and finishing with the present era, the Kali Yuga, a dark age of iron, anger and vice.

240 Helena Blavatsky, "Esoteric Instructions: The Esoteric Section", *Blavatsky Collected Writings Online*, vol. 12, 492, accessed June 29, 2016, http://www.katinkahesselink.net/blavatsky/articles/v12/y1890_052.htm. Tillett quotes this with an ellipsis after "America" that omits everything up to "until the year 1975", which is misleading, as it implies that Blavatsky is predicting the appearance of a "Master of Wisdom" in the year 1975, when in fact she is stating that no spiritual advancement can be made until 1975. Moreover, Blavatsky is not speaking here of the Lord Maitreya, she is referring to the Masters. See Tillett, *Elder Brother*, 107.

241 W.B. Yeats, *The Trembling of the Veil* (London: T. Werner Laurie, 1922), 68.

a fear of "heresy";[242] in other words, Blavatsky was attempting to forestall other Theosophists after her death from perverting the Secret Doctrine by claiming inspiration from the Masters, such as was the case with Leadbeater.

Under Leadbeater's guidance, Theosophy was subtly Christianised in a manner that would have horrified Blavatsky. For instance, Leadbeater took Blavatsky's Masters and impressed them into a new occult hierarchy, which was crowned by a Christian logos of Father, Son and Holy Ghost. There are ten levels or "initiations" in Leadbeater's scheme: Masters such as Koot Hoomi have taken the sixth initiation (one becomes an adept or Master after the fifth initiation); the "Logos" represents the tenth initiation; at the level of the seventh initiation there are three "Officers in the administration of the world", namely the "*Mahachohan*, the *Bodhisattva* and the *Manu*".[243] The *Bodhisattva* is the Theosophical Maitreya, who, Leadbeater claimed, had previously incarnated in the body of Jesus of Nazareth, and was subsequently known as "the Christ"; prior to that, he had incarnated as the Hindu god Krishna; and he was now due to manifest in the vehicle of Krishnamurti's body.[244]

In light of Krishnamurti's role as the next World Teacher, he was removed from the care of his impecunious father and Besant became his legal guardian.[245] While Leadbeater took charge of his worldly education by day, the Master Koot Hoomi oversaw his astral apprenticeship at night; each morning, the semi-literate, Telegu-speaking Krishnamurti would supposedly write down a record of the teachings in English, which resulted in the book *At the Feet of the Master* (1910), which, as one Theosophist noted, bore an uncanny similarity to Leadbeater's style.[246] In 1911, Krishnamurti came to England in order to obtain a university education, but the World Teacher soon proved to be an academic disappointment, and repeatedly failed the entrance examinations.[247] As a young man, Krishnamurti was extraordinarily handsome, and he was much admired by the rich lady Theosophists he met in London, who made generous contributions to the "Order of the Star in the East", an off-shoot of the TS that had been set up to pave the way for the messiah.[248]

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242 Ibid., 69.

243 See Tillett, *Elder Brother*, 105.

244 See ibid.

245 See Lutyens, *Life and Death of Krishnamurti*, 11.

246 See Sloss, *Lives in the Shadow*, 28. The nameless Theosophist above is Leadbeater's secretary, Ernest Wood, who also acted as Krishnamurti's tutor. See also Lutyens, *Life and Death of Krishnamurti*, 9. *At the Feet of the Master* is attributed to "Alcyone", the name given to Krishnamurti in the text.

247 See Sloss, *Lives in the Shadow*, 36–37.

248 See ibid., 31 and Lutyens, *Life and Death of Krishnamurti*, 13.

In 1922, while staying at Ojai in California, Krishnamurti made a spiritual breakthrough, though not in the manner the Theosophists had been expecting. On the night of August 17, a lump appeared on the nape of his neck and the next three days were spent in a state of moaning, trembling, semi-consciousness. On the eighteenth, Krishnamurti had an extrovertive mystical experience:

> There was a man mending the road; that man was myself; the pickaxe he held was myself; the very stone which he was breaking was a part of me; the tender blade of grass was my very being and the tree beside the man was myself. [...] The birds, the dust and the very noise were a part of me. Just then there was a car passing by at some distance; I was the driver, the engine and the tyres; as the car went further away from me, I was going away from myself. I was in everything, or rather everything was in me, inanimate and animate, the mountain, the worm and all breathing things.[249]

This type of mystical experience had no place in Theosophy. For occultists such as Blavatsky and Leadbeater, there was no need to meditate and transcend the self in mystical union, when they could allegedly communicate with the Masters on the astral plane, or consult the "akashic records", which contained information about everything that had happened in the universe as well as everything that would happen in the future.[250] The idea, then, that Krishnamurti had had a conventional mystical experience was deeply troubling to Theosophists, who tended to ignore it in favour of Krishnamurti's vision on the final evening of his three-day spiritual fever, in which he left his body while meditating under a pepper tree and beheld Koot Hoomi and the Lord Maitreya and proclaimed himself, in a much-quoted letter to Besant, to be "God-intoxicated".[251]

A few weeks later, in September, Krishnamurti began to suffer excruciating pains in his head and neck that came to be known as the "process". Krishnamurti interpreted this as a corporeal preparation for the impending incarnation of the Lord Maitreya.[252] The "process" continued, intermittently, for the rest of Krishnamurti's life, even after Besant's official announcement in

249 Quoted in Jayakar, *Krishnamurti,* 47.

250 See C.W. Leadbeater, *Clairvoyance* (London: Theosophical Publishing Society, 1903), 100, 109.

251 See Jayakar, *Krishnamurti*, 48.

252 See Lutyens, *Life and Death of Krishnamurti*, 45–46.

1927 that the Lord Maitreya had finally incarnated in Krishnamurti's body.[253] Significantly Leadbeater, despite his astral intimacy with the Masters and his powers of clairvoyance, was unable to furnish a Theosophical explanation for the "process". He interpreted Krishnamurti's pepper-tree epiphany as constituting the third initiation in his occult hierarchy.[254] Another new wrinkle in what Leadbeater's critics were derisively calling "Neo-Theosophy"[255] was the ability to make astonishingly rapid progress through the initiations of the occult hierarchy, which, in Blavatsky's system, would have required countless lifetimes to achieve. For instance, Leadbeater maintained that he and Besant had already passed their fourth initiation, just one below that of the Masters, and thus the same level as Blavatsky, who, while she had studied with the Masters, never presented herself as a fully-fledged adept. Leadbeater was solely responsible for putting Theosophists on probation with the Masters and oversaw their initiations, which allegedly took place on the astral plane while the initiates slept, and left no trace in the memory of the initiates.[256]

Leadbeater had long harboured doubts about whether Krishnamurti was in fact the messiah, and had hedged his bets by announcing other possible candidates, such as Krishnamurti's future friend and editor Rajagopal.[257] Meanwhile, Krishnamurti had grown disillusioned with Leadbeater (who was repeatedly accused, though never convicted, of sexual misconduct with adolescent boys),[258] and his faith in Theosophy was shaken by the death of his brother Nitya in 1925. He dismayed loyal Theosophists by speaking of his union with what he termed the "Beloved", which seemed much closer to a mystical godhead than the Lord Maitreya and Koot Hoomi ("My Beloved is the open skies, the flower, every human being").[259] Finally, in 1929, Krishnamurti dissolved the Order of the Star and renounced his role as World Teacher by proclaiming that "truth is a pathless land", the corollary being that the individual must find truth by himself, without the aid of gurus (such as Krishnamurti) or religious creeds (such as Theosophy).[260] Nonetheless, he was shrewd enough never to deny that he was the World Teacher, and continued to give talks on spiritual matters to audiences partly composed of Theosophists, thereby acting like a guru while simultaneously insisting that gurus were anathema and

253 See ibid., 67.
254 See ibid., 45.
255 For more on Neo-Theosophy, see Poller, "'Under a glamour'".
256 See Lutyens, *Life and Death of Krishnamurti*, 3.
257 See Sloss, *Lives in the Shadow*, 36.
258 See Tillett, *Elder Brother*, 77–78, 188, 196, 198–199, 200–201, 208.
259 See Lutyens, *Life and Death of Krishnamurti*, 69–70.
260 See ibid., 78.

that he was not a guru. In order to distance himself from the more outlandish aspects of Theosophy he had endorsed as the World Teacher, such as the Masters and the book he had allegedly written about his apprenticeship with them, he claimed not to remember anything about his "conditioned" existence,[261] in other words his life prior to the process, which culminated in his experiences of mystical union. Having thrown off the mantle of Theosophy, Krishnamurti was able to cultivate his own reputation as a mystic, and by the time he met Huxley he was attracting devoted audiences in America, Europe, Australia and India.

Krishnamurti's anti-guru stance was not simply a reaction against the enormous spiritual expectations he had been forced to shoulder as the vehicle for the Maitreya; he believed that religions were both divisive and outmoded (since they were formulated in light of a bygone reality), and actively prevented the individual from perceiving reality in the present. Huxley shared Krishnamurti's distrust of guru-dom, which he regarded as a form of idolatry; he had refused to become Prabhavananda's disciple and disapproved of Heard's assumption of the guru role at Trabuco. In his foreword to *The First and Last Freedom* (1954), an edited collection of Krishnamurti's talks, Huxley endorses Krishnamurti's hostility to gurus:

> An education that teaches us not how but what to think is an education that calls for a governing class of pastors and masters. But "the very idea of leading somebody is antisocial and anti-spiritual". To the man who exercises it, leadership brings gratification of the craving for power; to those who are led, it brings the gratification of the desire for certainty and security. The guru provides a kind of dope.[262]

Huxley and Krishnamurti had much in common. Peter Washington notes that "they were shy, retiring men who had both led sheltered and privileged yet painful lives, losing their mothers in early childhood", and that they both "had been forced into public roles that went against their natures".[263] At the outbreak of World War I, Krishnamurti was living in England and wanted to enlist like his brother Nitya (who briefly served with the Red Cross in Flanders), but was prevented by Besant.[264] Unlike Heard, Krishnamurti was at ease among

261 See Sloss, *Lives in the Shadow*, 38–39.

262 Aldous Huxley, foreword to *The First and Last Freedom*, by Jiddu Krishnamurti (London: Victor Gollancz, 1988), 14.

263 Peter Washington, *Madame Blavatsky's Baboon: Theosophy and the Emergence of the Western Guru* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1993), 317.

264 See Lutyens, *Life and Death of Krishnamurti*, 21.

the Hollywood elite. Isherwood provides a fascinating first impression of him at Huxley's legendary picnic in November 1939, at which were present Bertrand Russell, Anita Loos and Greta Garbo: "Krishnamurti was a slight, sallow little man with a scrubby chin and rather bloodshot eyes, whose face bore only faint traces of the extraordinary beauty he must have had as a boy".[265] He reports Heard's scepticism of Krishnamurti's spirituality, complaining that he lacked the tranquillity of a true mystic. But Isherwood notes Krishnamurti's "simple dignity" and asserts that "he had done what no other man alive had done: he had refused to become a god".[266]

Furthermore, Krishnamurti's philosophy was remarkably congruent with Huxley's. For instance, here is Krishnamurti on the subject of nationalism:

> Outwardly it brings about divisions between people, classifications, wars and destruction, which is obvious to anyone who is observant. Inwardly, psychologically, this identification with the greater, with the country, with an idea, is obviously a form of self-expansion. Living in a little village or a big town or whatever it may be, I am nobody; but if I identify myself with the larger, with the country, if I call myself a Hindu, it flatters my vanity, it gives me gratification, prestige, a sense of well-being; and that identification with the larger, which is a psychological necessity for those who feel that self-expansion is essential, also creates conflict, strife, between people.[267]

In *Ends and Means*, Huxley writes:

> A principal cause of war is nationalism, and nationalism is immensely popular because it is psychologically satisfying to individual nationalists. Every nationalism is an idolatrous religion, in which the god is the personified state, represented in many instances by a more or less deified king or dictator. Membership of the *ex hypothesi* divine nation is thought of as imparting a kind of mystical pre-eminence. Thus, all "God's Englishmen" are superior to "the lesser breeds without the law", and every individual God's-Englishman is entitled to think himself superior to every member of the lesser breed, even the lordliest and wealthiest, even the most intelligent, the most highly gifted, the most saintly. Any man who

265 Isherwood, *Diaries*, 50.
266 Ibid.
267 Krishnamurti, *First and Last Freedom*, 148.

> believes strongly enough in the local nationalistic idolatry can find in his faith an antidote against even the most acute inferiority complex.[268]

In *Eyeless in Gaza*, Huxley expressed the idea that war is a collective expression of individual proclivities: "States and nations don't exist", writes Anthony Beavis in his diary.

> There are only people. Sets of people living in certain areas, having certain allegiances. Nations won't change their national policies unless and until people change their private policies. All governments, even Hitler's, even Stalin's, even Mussolini's, are representative. Today's national behaviour – a large-scale projection of today's individual behaviour. Or rather, to be more accurate, a large-scale projection of the individual's secret wishes and intentions.[269]

In *The First and Last Freedom*, Krishnamurti maintains that:

> War is the spectacular and bloody projection of our everyday life, is it not? War is merely an outward expression of our inward state, an enlargement of our daily action. It is more spectacular, more bloody, more destructive, but it is the collective result of our individual activities. Therefore, you and I are responsible for war.[270]

In fact, Krishnamurti was reading Huxley even before they became friends. In a letter to Emily Lutyens at the end of January 1938, Krishnamurti thanks her for sending "Aldous Huxley's book", which, given the date, is most likely *Ends and Means*.[271] Moreover, he may well have appropriated, whether wittingly or not, Huxley's ends-and-means terminology for his own pacifist arguments. For instance, during a public talk at Ojai on June 2, 1940, Krishnamurti asks his audience how they are going to dispose of the leaders who promote hatred and war: "If you destroy them", he argues,

> you use the very means they have employed and so make of yourself also an instrument of hatred and brutality. Hate cannot be destroyed by hate, however much you like to hide your hate under pleasant sounding words.

268 Aldous Huxley, "War", in *CE* 4: 213.
269 Huxley, *Eyeless*, 155.
270 Krishnamurti, *First and Last Freedom*, 182.
271 Letter from Krishnamurti to Emily Lutyens (January 31, 1938), Brockwood Park.

> Methods determine the ends. You cannot kill in order to have peace and order; to have peace you must create peace within yourself […]. In your eagerness you want immediate results, you are concerned with results and not with the ways and means.[272]

But it should not be supposed that Krishnamurti was substantively influenced by Huxley, since his pacifist arguments anticipate Huxley's rather than the other way round. For example, two years before *Eyeless in Gaza* was published, Krishnamurti was arguing that: "Society is nothing else but the expression of the individual multiplied by the thousand".[273] In the same volume, he affirms that "nationality, through the instrument of patriotism, is a means of war. All nationalities, all sovereign governments, must prepare for war; it is their duty, it is no good your being a pacifist and at the same time talking about patriotism".[274]

Krishnamurti also seems to have confirmed Huxley's intuition that mystical experience was essentially ineffable and defied adequate linguistic expression. Certainly, from around the time of his friendship with Krishnamurti, Huxley's fictional characters begin to regard language as a barrier to the apprehension of ultimate reality. For instance, in *After Many a Summer*, the mystic Mr Propter laments,

> the only vocabulary at our disposal is a vocabulary primarily intended for thinking strictly human thoughts about strictly human concerns. But the things *we* want to talk about are non-human realities and non-human ways of thinking. Hence the radical inadequacy of all statements about […] God, or spirit, or eternity.[275]

In the same novel, Huxley also proposes that our ego or soul is in part a linguistic entity. "The nature of our 'souls'", Propter affirms,

> and of the world they inhabit would be entirely different from what it is, if we had never learnt to talk, or if we had learnt to talk Eskimo instead of English. Madness consists, among other things, in imagining that our

272 Jiddu Krishnamurti, *Authentic Notes of Discussions and Talks Given by Krishnamurti, Ojai and Sarobia, 1940* (Hollywood: The Star Publishing Trust, 1940), 17.

273 Jiddu Krishnamurti, *Verbatim Reports of Talks and Answers to Questions by Krishnamurti, Auckland, New Zealand, 1934* (London: The Star Publishing Trust, 1934), 9.

274 Ibid., 9–10.

275 Huxley, *Summer*, 157.

> "soul" exists apart from the language our nurses happen to have taught us.[276]

One of the cornerstones of Krishnamurti's philosophy was his assertion that "the thinker comes into being through thought".[277] In other words, it is thought, and the language in which it is enshrined, that creates the illusion of the thinker/ego/self, and, as a corollary, subject-object dualism, whereas the universe is monistic, forestalling the very possibility of individuality or separation. For example, the thought "I want an ice cream" creates the subject ("I") and the object ("ice cream"), and sets up an illusory dualism in which the two are essentially different, whereas in a monistic universe both man and ice cream are expressions of the impersonal godhead and are essentially the same. Hence the end of thought, in Krishnamurti's scheme, engenders the dissolution of the ego and the concomitant ability to perceive reality without having to rely on the distorting medium of language. "There is a transcendent spontaneity of life", writes Huxley,

> a "creative Reality", as Krishnamurti calls it, which reveals itself as immanent only when the perceiver's mind is in a state of "alert passivity", of "choiceless awareness". Judgement and comparison commit us irrevocably to duality. Only choiceless awareness can lead to non-duality, to the reconciliation of opposites in a total understanding and a total love.[278]

Krishnamurti maintained that the mind could be stilled, thereby achieving choiceless awareness, by examining every thought and feeling in a non-judgemental manner until one's stream of consciousness was exhausted.[279] This, for Krishnamurti, was what constituted meditation. "Only when you discard completely, through understanding, the whole structure of the self, can that which is eternal, timeless, immeasurable, come into being".[280] Huxley's excoriation of time, in *After Many a Summer*, and his valorisation of eternity or the eternal, may have been partly inspired by Krishnamurti. In Krishnamurti's philosophy, the apprehension of truth is only possible in the eternal present, and thus truth cannot be found in the past, in sacred texts and religious dogma. For Krishnamurti, time is associated with the past, with

276 Ibid., 271.
277 Krishnamurti, *First and Last Freedom*, 231.
278 Huxley, foreword to *First and Last Freedom*, 17.
279 See Krishnamurti, *First and Last Freedom*, 219–220.
280 Ibid., 108.

the known, with the unreal, and it is time (rather than desire) that is the cause of sorrow. Our personalities are founded on thoughts, which are rooted in time (the past), and thus when we strive after religious experiences, or seek to apprehend the real, all we encounter are projections of ourselves.[281] Only a mind that is perfectly still, that is choicelessly aware, uncorrupted by ego or language, can apprehend reality. Huxley's austere new conviction, in *After Many a Summer*, that only mystics like Mr Propter can apprehend the truth, and that unenlightened politicians and social reformers can only rearrange the chaos and evil in the world, may also have been inspired by Krishnamurti. "We now cooperate with any person who offers a reform, a change", writes Krishnamurti, "which only perpetuates conflict and misery", only by reforming ourselves from within, by practising choiceless awareness and perceiving the real, can we create a "new civilization, a totally different world in which there is no acquisitiveness, no envy, no comparison".[282]

Krishnamurti's mystical experiences seem to be of the extrovertive variety. Richard Jones associates Krishnamurti's "choiceless awareness" with the practice of mindfulness.[283] "To mindfulness mystics", he writes, "the analytical mind alienates us from what is real, and language is its tool: conceptualizations embedded in language stand between us and what is real".[284] When we look at the world, we do not perceive the real, or the world in itself, we perceive the categories and concepts created by our language and culture. "Mindfulness counters this", writes Jones:

> it loosens the grip that the concepts we create have on our sense-experiences, inner experiences, and actions. The sense of a separate long-term ego vanishes. In mindfulness meditation, one does not try to suppress thoughts and feelings but rather to observe them silently as they occur without mental comment; in this way, they do not become distractions but other objects of awareness.[285]

This seems akin to both Krishnamurti's meditation technique and the resulting state of choiceless awareness. On the other hand, some of his mystical episodes seem more introvertive in character, or at least seem to combine extrovertive and introvertive experience. The following is a good example:

281 See Jiddu Krishnamurti, *The Book of Life: Daily Meditations with Krishnamurti* (New York: HarperCollins, 1995), August 4 and 15.
282 Krishnamurti, *Book of Life*, November 5.
283 See Jones, *Philosophy of Mysticism*, 18.
284 Ibid., 14.
285 Ibid., 15.

> The room became full with that benediction. Now what followed is almost impossible to put down in words; words are such dead things, with definite set meaning and what took place was beyond all words and description. It was the centre of all creation; it was a purifying seriousness that cleansed the brain of every thought and feeling; its seriousness was as lightning which destroys and burns up; the profundity of it was not measurable, it was there immovable, impenetrable, a solidity that was as light as the heavens. It was in the eyes, in the breath. It was in the eyes and the eyes could see. The eyes that saw, that looked were wholly different from the eyes of the organ and yet they were the same eyes. There was only seeing, the eyes that saw beyond time-space. There was impenetrable dignity and a peace that was the essence of all movement, action. No virtue touched it for it was beyond all virtue and sanctions of man. There was love that was utterly perishable and so it had the delicacy of all new things, vulnerable, destructible and yet it was beyond all this. It was there imperishable, unnameable, the unknowing.[286]

Over the years, Krishnamurti would use various secular terms, such as the "otherness", the "immensity", the "Beloved", to describe what seemed to be a godhead or divine Ground. Krishnamurti's philosophy derived, Huxley believed, from his ability to enter these mystical states, and conferred on him a spiritual authority that Heard lacked. For Huxley, the fact that Krishnamurti had arrived, by mystical means, at a pacifist position that was almost identical to his own, undoubtedly strengthened his pacifist resolve as another world war began to seem inevitable. Nonetheless, when war broke out, Huxley clearly felt somewhat guilty about his American exile. Anita Loos affirms that he attempted to decline his first job for MGM (a screenplay for a biopic of Marie Curie): "I simply cannot accept", he told her, "all that money to work in pleasant surroundings while my family and friends are going hungry and being bombed in England".[287] Loos recalls that Huxley could not bring himself to discuss the war.[288] Bedford confirms that Huxley refused to speak about the subject and felt ideologically out of kilter with the majority of his countrymen.[289]

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286 Jiddu Krishnamurti, *Krishnamurti's Notebook* (Ojai: Krishnamurti Foundation of America, 2003), 28–29.

287 Anita Loos, *Kiss Hollywood Goodbye* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1979), 158. Loos claims it was $2,500 a week, but Bedford asserts it was $1,500. She also notes that Huxley asked Krishnamurti's advice about whether or not to take the job. See Bedford, *Aldous Huxley*, 388n11.

288 See Loos, *Kiss Hollywood Goodbye*, 158.

289 See Bedford, *Aldous Huxley*, 385.

Meanwhile, back in England, Huxley was being attacked for his mystical aloofness from the European war. For instance, Harold Nicolson lambastes Huxley for seeking refuge in "the Wisdom of the East" while "Western civilisation is bursting into flames and thunder".[290] "Mr Huxley strives", he continues,

> by practising "detachment",[291] by refusing to concern himself with what is terrible or wicked, to find "illumination". I do not imagine for one moment that so fine a soul as his can find detachment easy or illumination rapid. There must be moments, even for him, even in Hollywood, of doubt whether the Higher Wisdom can best be defended at a distance of three thousand miles. There must be moments when he must ask himself whether it is not conceivable that he is being guilty of spiritual arrogance.[292]

Two books appeared that sought to refute the mystical basis of Huxley's pacifism: *Ends Are Means* (1938) by the communist K.S. Shelvankar and *Flight from Conflict* (1944) by Laurence Collier. *After Many a Summer* was published in October 1939, and its sternly mystical message was derided by several critics. "Retreat to mysticism", wrote David Daiches, "is a poor prescription for the millions who already, through the turn of political fortune, have to face a violent death".[293] Anthony West, in the *New Statesman and Nation*, was openly contemptuous of Huxley's mysticism, which he referred to as a "synthetic yogo-buddhic-christian religion" and represented Huxley as "the Evangelist of Mr. Gerald Heard's Neo-Brahminism".[294] The reviewer in the *Catholic World* noted that whereas *Ends and Means* was full of positive measures to achieve peace on a personal level (group meditation, the Alexander technique and so on), in *After Many a Summer* "[e]ven the best intentioned activity only leads to evil consequences, and there is no longer any reason for Huxley to want to do anything for others".[295] Huxley's mouthpiece Mr Propter "dreams of a small agrarian community in some fertile valley, a sort of beaverboard Shangri-la [*sic*], in which a few chatty contemplatives might wait out the war in seclusion and safety".[296] While Edgar Johnson in the *Kenyon Review* complained that

290 Harold Nicolson, "People and Things", *Spectator* (April 19, 1940): 555.
291 Nicolson evidently means "non-attachment", which is defined in the discussion of *Ends and Means* above, and is quite different from "detachment", which implies indifference.
292 Nicolson, "People and Things", 555.
293 Quoted in Dunaway, *Huxley in Hollywood*, 161.
294 Anthony West, in Watt, *Critical Heritage*, 319.
295 Ibid., 324.
296 Ibid.

"Huxley sees humanity tearing toward perdition, and all his extraordinary mental maneuvers are the muddled rationalization of the desire to stand aside".[297]

But rather than being swayed by such criticism, Huxley became more than ever convinced that mysticism was the key to preventing further conflict.[298] Indeed, it was doubtless his desire, around this time, to disseminate the gospel of mysticism that led him to conceive of *The Perennial Philosophy*. Discussing the project in a letter to his American editor Cass Canfield, Huxley writes:

> Seeing that it is perfectly obvious that we shall never have more than a temporary truce until most men accept a common *weltanschauung,* it would seem to be useful and timely to produce such a book, showing precisely what the best and most intelligent human beings have in fact agreed upon during the last three thousand years or so.[299]

During the war years, Huxley saw much more of Krishnamurti than he did of Heard (who, from 1942 onwards, was resident at Trabuco). Much like Garsington during World War I, Krishnamurti's home at Ojai became a "haven for pacifists" during World War II. "There were many faces of pacifism among us", writes Sloss,

> but Aldous, Mr Robbie [Robert Logan] and Krinsh [her pet name for Krishnamurti] all believed that peace must be a clear issue within an individual before he could publicly promote it. Also they recognized that during the fever of war political pressure was no longer feasible.[300]

On his frequent visits to Ojai, Huxley evidently mined Krishnamurti for mystical insights. In a letter to Isherwood (February 7, 1942), Huxley writes that he has been reading the mystic Sri Aurobindo's latest book, which he says is good but too long-winded. "Better than books have been some recent conversations with Krishnamurti, who has spoken to me of some of his experiences in a most interesting and illuminating way".[301]

Huxley appears to have been attracted to Krishnamurti's approach to meditation. Just how much, and in what fashion, Huxley meditated, though, remains a vexed issue. "I do not think that Aldous, unlike Gerald Heard, meditated in

297 Ibid., 331–332.
298 See for instance his letter to Mary Hutchinson in Sexton, *Selected Letters*, 381–382.
299 Smith, *Letters*, 502.
300 Sloss, *Lives in the Shadow*, 183.
301 Smith, *Letters*, 475.

any formal, stated way", writes Bedford, "only that in his later life not all his private hours were spent over typewriter or note-book".[302] On the other hand, Heard asserts that Huxley had a regular meditation practice,[303] and Matthew Huxley recalls his father retreating to his room to meditate in the afternoon and evening at Llano del Rio (a forty-acre ranch in the Mojave Desert in southern California, where Huxley lived from December 1941 to February 1947).[304] Although meditation helped alleviate Huxley's insomnia in the mid-1930s, he confides in a letter to Robert Nichols that he finds it "a very difficult process which I don't pretend ever to have succeeded in mastering".[305] However, the following year (July 1936), he tells T.S. Eliot that he finds meditation

> effective – even when practised, as I do it, rather unsystematically and with difficulty. True, the difficulty grows less [...] as one persists; one is able to keep the mind directed, focussed, one-pointed more easily, after a few months, than at the beginning.[306]

But for reasons both practical and temperamental, Huxley was never able to meditate for six hours a day like Heard, and therefore must have baulked at the amount of "japam" expected of a Vedanta initiate.[307] In *Ends and Means*, Huxley sounds a note of mild exasperation when he describes "the technique of meditation" as being "probably about as difficult as the technique of violin-playing".[308] Isherwood recalls Huxley invoking Krishnamurti in order to mock Prabhavananda's meditation technique:

> I must have told Aldous at least something about Prabhavananda's latest instructions to me, thus prompting Aldous to tell me that Krishnamurti never meditated on "objects" – such as lotuses, lights, gods, and goddesses – and even believed that doing so might lead to insanity.[309]

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302 Bedford, *Aldous Huxley*, 441.

303 See Heard, "Poignant Prophet", 66.

304 See his interview with David King Dunaway, June 11, 1985, in the Aldous Huxley Oral History Papers, HM 56903, The Huntington Library, San Marino.

305 Smith, *Letters*, 389.

306 Ibid., 406.

307 Isherwood explains that making japam is the practice of using a rosary to keep count of the number of times you repeat your mantra while meditating; the average amount for "an energetic devotee would be between five thousand and ten thousand daily". See Isherwood, *My Guru*, 64–65.

308 Huxley, "Beliefs", in CE 4: 379.

309 Isherwood, *My Guru*, 50.

Indeed, Krishnamurti was often scathing about conventional forms of meditation. "It is not a matter of breathing in a particular way", he affirms,

> or looking at your nose, or awakening the power to perform certain tricks, or any of the rest of that immature nonsense. … Meditation is not something apart from life. When you are driving a car or sitting in a bus, when you are chatting aimlessly, when you are walking by yourself in a wood or watching a butterfly being carried along by the wind – to be choicelessly aware of all that is part of meditation.[310]

Sawyer argues that Huxley adopted Krishnamurti's mindfulness meditation. "Huxley liked this practice", he writes, "and liked that it was really not separate from life itself. One didn't have to stop doing anything to meditate, one simply had to try to be present in what one was doing".[311] But trying to be "present" while driving a car or walking in a wood is not the same as being "choicelessly aware" of these things. Choiceless awareness implies the transcendence of the ego and subject-object dualism, and it was not until Huxley began to experiment with psychedelic drugs that he was able to apprehend the world in this mystical manner. For instance, when Huxley first takes mescaline in *The Doors of Perception* (1954), he is choicelessly aware of the flowers, books and furniture in his study;[312] or when he first takes LSD, he relates in a letter to Humphry Osmond how it

> desubjectifies the perceiver, who no longer views the outside world with desire or aversion, no longer judges automatically and irrevocably, is no longer an emotionally charged ego, but finds himself an element in a given reality, which is not an affair of objects and subjects, but a cosmic unity of love.[313]

Perhaps the best insight into Huxley's own meditation technique can be found in a lecture given at the Vedanta Center in Hollywood:

> It has always seemed to me, I may be wrong, that the most valuable spiritual exercise is to permit thoughts to come, these often pointless and foolish thoughts that occur, but just the same, do what you like, I will pay

310 Krishnamurti, *Book of Life*, December 23.
311 Sawyer, *Aldous Huxley*, 120.
312 See Huxley, *Doors*, in *CE* 5: 161–162.
313 Smith, *Letters*, 770.

> attention to them. And if one does this (this is a very curious phenomenon), if one pays attention to the irrelevancies that keep popping up in one's mind, the irrelevancies stop of themselves for a short time, and for a moment you do get some sense of a consciousness of consciousness, an awareness of being aware without any particular content, and which – this is of course not enlightenment or anything like it – but it is I think a valuable preparation which will permit this impartial view of the world to be realised in its own good time. We cannot of course press this thing; nothing that we can do will actually produce this thing; all that we can do is to get out of our own light, to use our will to will ourselves away.[314]

It would seem from the above that Huxley is at best enjoying brief snatches of choiceless awareness, which he believes will one day enable "this impartial view of the world" to be sustained while driving a car or watching a butterfly. It should also be noted that the practice of dispassionately examining one's distracting thoughts during meditation is not peculiar to Krishnamurti. For instance, in an essay entitled "Distractions", Huxley notes that Meister Eckhart recommended the "dispassionate and scientific examination of distractions": not only, Huxley opines, is it "an admirable exercise in mental concentration", it is also a "means for increasing that self-knowledge which is one of the indispensable pre-requisites to a knowledge of God".[315] For Huxley, though, Krishnamurti's approach to meditation was ultimately no more successful than Prabhavananda's in facilitating mystical experience. In *The Doors of Perception*, Huxley writes that before taking mescaline,

> I had known contemplation only in its humbler, its more ordinary forms – as discursive thinking; as a rapt absorption in poetry or painting or music; as a patient waiting upon those inspirations, without which even the prosiest writer cannot hope to accomplish anything; as occasional glimpses, in nature, of Wordsworth's "something far more deeply interfused"; as systematic silence leading, sometimes, to hints of an "obscure knowledge".[316]

Huxley had always acknowledged the arduousness of the spiritual life. Mr Propter declares that "every individual is called upon to display not only

314 Aldous Huxley, "Who Are We?", CD record of a lecture given at the Vedanta Society, Hollywood, on April 3, 1955, in the Vedanta archives.

315 Aldous Huxley, "Distractions", in *Vedanta for the Western World*, 132–133.

316 Huxley, *Doors*, in *CE* 5: 172.

unsleeping good-will but also unsleeping intelligence" if he or she is to achieve the "actualization of that more-than-personal consciousness".[317] Even "intelligence", he continues, "is not sufficient as an adjunct to good-will; there must also be the recollection which seeks to transform and transcend intelligence. Many are called, but few are chosen – because few even know in what salvation consists".[318] But whereas Propter maintains that anyone is capable, given the right training and preparation, of mystical union,[319] Bruno Rontini, in *Time Must Have a Stop* (1944), thinks it is a miracle that one in ten thousand achieve salvation.[320]

This radical downward revision of the possibility of enlightenment is perhaps eloquent of Huxley's frustration with his spiritual progress. Indeed, one of the elements that seems to have resonated for Huxley in writing about François Leclerc du Tremblay (henceforth Father Joseph) in *Grey Eminence* was his spiritual travails. Father Joseph was a practising mystic in the Catholic Church, whose "experience of union" with God, while "not of the highest order", was nonetheless "undoubtedly authentic".[321] Partly as a result of his political collaboration with Cardinal Richelieu, his mystical experiences came to an end and he began to feel forsaken by God. "It was a dark night of the soul", writes Huxley,

> but not that salutary dark described by St John of the Cross, not the dark night of those who are undergoing the final and excruciating purgation from self-will; no, it was that much more terrible, because fruitless and degrading, dark night, which is the experience of those who have seen God and then, by their own fault, lost him again.[322]

Matthew Huxley, recalling his father at this time, mentions the passage above: "I think Aldous went through that", he says, referring to the "dark night of the soul", though he admits that this is pure speculation.[323] In order to lose God, one must have found Him first, in other words, Huxley would need to have had an authentic mystical experience, which does not accord with his confession of not having known "contemplation at its height" until he took mescaline in *The Doors of Perception*. What seems more likely is that he began to despair,

317 Huxley, *Summer*, 96–97.
318 Ibid., 97.
319 See ibid., 272.
320 See Huxley, *Time*, 101.
321 Huxley, *Grey Eminence*, 243.
322 Ibid.
323 See Aldous Huxley Oral History Papers, HM 56903, Huntington Library.

around this time, of attaining mystical union, despite the austerities of his life in the desert at Llano.

But the fact that enlightenment was such an extraordinarily rare achievement that was contingent, beyond all practical and ethical considerations, on the grace of the divine Ground, made it all the more urgent and essential that the world should pay attention to genuine mystics such as Krishnamurti. In *Grey Eminence*, Huxley charts the history of mysticism, from the *Upanishads* to Plotinus, St Augustine, Dionysius the Areopagite, the anonymous author of *The Cloud of Unknowing*, down to Cardinal Bérulle (1575–1629). Huxley illustrates how the latter was in part responsible for the disappearance of mysticism from the Catholic Church. Instead of subordinating Catholic dogma to his mystical experiences, Bérulle allowed Catholic dogma to dictate his approach to mental prayer, and held that the proper subject of contemplation was not the "undifferentiated Godhead" of the Dionysian tradition but Jesus and the Virgin Mary. In so doing, Huxley points out,

> Bérulle positively guaranteed that none who followed his devotional practices should ever accede to the highest states of union or enlightenment. Contemplation of persons and their qualities entails a great deal of analytic thinking and an incessant use of the imagination. But analytic thinking and imagination are precisely the things which prevent the soul from attaining enlightenment. On this point all the great mystical writers, Christian and Oriental, are unanimous and emphatic.[324]

This may sound like a petty doctrinal distinction, but it is analogous to the difference, for an orthodox Christian, between praying to God and praying to Apollo. Huxley likens mystics to "salt", who keep the "earth disinfected" and "prevent it from falling into complete decay".[325] Mystics, he writes,

> are channels through which a little knowledge of reality filters down into our human universe of ignorance and illusion. A totally unmystical world would be a world totally blind and insane. From the beginnings of the eighteenth century onwards, the sources of mystical knowledge have been steadily diminishing in number, all over the planet. We are dangerously far advanced into the darkness.[326]

324 Huxley, *Grey Eminence*, 85–86.
325 Ibid., 87.
326 Ibid., 87–88.

And the "brilliant and saintly Pierre de Bérulle", Huxley concludes, greatly contributed to this "darkening of the human spirit".[327]

Father Joseph learnt the art of mental prayer from Father Benet (an English mystic who also instructed Bérulle); as a consequence, Huxley argues, of meditating on the Passion of Christ, which had the effect of desensitising him to merely human suffering, Father Joseph was debarred from full *unio mystica*, and was therefore unable to perceive the evil results of his political machinations, which were designed to destabilise the Hapsburg Empire so that France might lead a united Europe in a glorious crusade against the Turks. The long-range repercussions of Father Joseph's actions were catastrophic: the origins of World Wars I and II can be traced back, Huxley argues, to the Thirty Years' War, which paved the way for the French Revolution, which in turn led to "Napoleonic imperialism", "German nationalism", and the break-up of the Hapsburg empire into "half a dozen independent, but entirely non-viable, national states".[328] For Huxley, Father Joseph is a cautionary example of the futility of political action unaccompanied by mystical insight. Thus while the writing of a biography of Father Joseph might seem, at first, to be a mental flight from the reality of World War II, it actually justifies Huxley's mystical quest and his refusal to countenance any form of politics that were not designed to "make the world safe for mystical experience".[329]

In June 1945, Huxley purchased a house in the mountain village of Wrightwood, six thousand feet above sea level. Perhaps feeling somewhat isolated, he bought the neighbouring house and invited Krishnamurti, Rosalind and Radha to spend the summer there. Krishnamurti evidently liked the property and purchased it the following year.[330] Huxley and Krishnamurti encouraged Rosalind to establish a school, which was named after its location, Happy Valley, next to Krishnamurti's home in Ojai. When Happy Valley opened in September 1946, Huxley, who was one of the trustees, gave the Commencement Address on the school's motto (*aun aprendo*, I am still learning), which he had doubtless supplied.[331] In 1948, while they were neighbours at Wrightwood, Krishnamurti taught Huxley and Maria *haṭha yoga*.[332] It is unclear at what point Krishnamurti began to practise modern postural yoga. A former friend recalls that

327 Ibid., 88.
328 Ibid., 249.
329 Sexton, *Selected Letters*, 361.
330 See Sloss, *Lives in the Shadow*, 193, 197.
331 See Murray, *Aldous Huxley*, 387.
332 See Dunaway, *Huxley in Hollywood*, 279.

Krishnamurti began his *asana* (postural) practice after reading a book on yoga, but Krishnamurti was unable to name the book or its author when pressed. After demonstrating a few *asanas*, Krishnamurti said to his friend:

> Please understand [...] that I am doing yoga purely for physical reasons. It is only a means of keeping fit. Yoga is a means to an end and not an end in itself. It is necessary to understand this clearly because yogis perform yoga with the intention of acquiring psychic powers or awakening the kundalini and all that stuff. Such things don't interest me.[333]

In 1948, B.K.S. Iyengar (one of the most feted practitioners of postural yoga in the twentieth century and the founder of Iyengar yoga) attended one of Krishnamurti's talks in Pune. He was introduced to Krishnamurti by a mutual friend and demonstrated his *asana* mastery. Krishnamurti promptly asked him for private yoga instruction and became his student for the next twenty years.[334] It does not seem that the Huxleys were so persistent with their yoga practice, though, for I can find no further references to it.[335]

As the decade wore on, despite owning neighbouring properties, Huxley and Krishnamurti saw less of each other. This was largely due to the fact that, now that the war was over, Krishnamurti was able to travel again and he spent a good deal of his time in India and Europe. It is clear, though, that Huxley maintained the respect and affection he felt for Krishnamurti till the end of his life.[336] In a letter to Humphry Osmond on February 22, 1957, Huxley writes:

> Have you read Krishnamurti's new book, *Commentaries on Living*? Together with the previous volume of selections from his talks, *The First and Last Freedom,* it offers an amazingly subtle diagnosis of our

333 Susunaga Weeraperuma, *J. Krishnamurti as I Knew Him*, 2nd ed. (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 1996), 66.

334 See Manouso Manos, ed., *Iyengar: His Life and Work* (Porthill: Timeless Books, 1987), 48–49.

335 Isherwood briefly practised postural yoga in the late 1930s under the guidance of a woman he met through the Huxleys, though he does not indicate that the Huxleys practised yoga with her. See Isherwood, *My Guru*, 85. See also, Lauryssens, *My Brave New World*, chap. 2, who has Maria but not Aldous practising yoga in the early 1930s. For my thoughts on the reliability of this non-fiction novel, see Chapter 5.

336 In light of the evidence provided below, I cannot agree with Meckier, who imagines that Murugan in *Island* is a satirical portrait of the young Krishnamurti. See Jerome Meckier, "Enemies of Utopia: Young Krishnamurti and Madame Blavatsky in Aldous Huxley's *Island*", *Aldous Huxley Annual* 10–11 (2010–11): 299–316.

> psychological delinquencies and an amazingly practical, though difficult, self-treatment.[337]

Writing to Osmond again, in August 1961, Huxley reports hearing "a series of talks" by Krishnamurti in Gstaad, and describes them as "among the most impressive things I ever listened to".[338] "It was like listening to a discourse of the Buddha", he continues,

> such power, such intrinsic authority, such an uncompromising refusal to allow the poor *homme moyen sensuel* any escapes or surrogates, any gurus, saviours, *führers*, churches. "I show you sorrow and the ending of sorrow" – and if you don't choose to fulfil the conditions for ending sorrow, be prepared, whatever gurus, churches etc. you may believe in, for the indefinite continuance of sorrow.[339]

Huxley also met Krishnamurti in Rome on a couple of occasions in March 1963, where he was attending a conference of the UN Food and Agricultural Organisation.[340] Krishnamurti wrote to Mary Lutyens that Huxley had "looked fairly well" and thus he was shocked to learn of his death eight months later.[341]

Conclusion

There can be no doubt that Gerald Heard had an enduring influence on Huxley. Certainly, Huxley managed successfully to integrate Heard's ideas into his fiction. For example, the mystical philosophy of Mr Propter is endorsed by the plot of *After Many a Summer*, in which the time-obsessed sensualist Jo Stoyte is doomed to the simian fate of his forerunner, the Fifth Earl of Gonister, who has neotenously matured into an ape as a result of his quest for immortality. But while Huxley was happy to follow Heard into pacifist activism in inter-war England, he had no desire to serve as one of Heard's "intentional living" noviciates at Trabuco during World War II since, as far as Huxley was concerned, Heard was no more of a spiritual authority than he was himself. The "lull" with Heard made way for Krishnamurti, and his ideas concerning time and eternity

337 Smith, *Letters*, 818.
338 Ibid., 917.
339 Ibid., 917–918.
340 Lutyens, *Life and Death of Krishnamurti*, 125.
341 See ibid.

may have played a part in *After Many a Summer*. Huxley valued Krishnamurti's insights on meditation and attempted to achieve choiceless awareness in his own meditation practice. Furthermore, Krishnamurti was a staunch pacifist ally during World War II and his home at Ojai was a magnet for fellow pacifists, providing Huxley, who felt guilty for leaving friends and family behind in England, with congenial company and reassuring him of the rightness of his mystical pacifism, which was increasingly drawing fire from critics. Krishnamurti's insistence that only mystics could apprehend reality and thus social and political reformers were, to use one of Huxley's favourite phrases, fiddling while Rome burns, can be found in *After Many a Summer* and *Grey Eminence*. On the other hand, Huxley did not uncritically endorse Krishnamurti's philosophy: for instance, Krishnamurti held that even mystical texts from previous eras were outdated and did not reflect the truth of the timeless now, and thus for Krishnamurti, who proudly claimed not to have read the *Upanishads* or the *Gita*, *The Perennial Philosophy* would have seemed irrelevant.

The next big influence in Huxley's life was not a person but a thing: mescaline. Krishnamurti, perhaps because he could have mystical experiences unaided, was dismissive of his friend's reliance on psychedelic drugs.[342] At first, Heard shared Huxley's enthusiasm for mescaline and LSD, but he soon adopted a more conservative attitude that Huxley did not share.[343] In Chapter 6, I analyse the mistaken way in which the views of Huxley and Heard have been conflated, and point out the significant points of departure in their later work.

342 See his comments in Bedford, *Aldous Huxley*, 718.

343 Where Heard cautiously advocated LSD as an educational tool in talks to right-wing libertarian groups such as The Wayfarers, and in his later books which found a small but sympathetic conservative audience, Huxley spread the psychedelic gospel in a much more democratic form, writing essays on the subject for popular publications such as the *Saturday Evening Post, Esquire* and *Playboy*, in addition to his books *The Doors of Perception, Heaven and Hell* and *Island*. See Falby, *Pigeonholes*, 128–130.

CHAPTER 5

Sex and Alternative Spirituality

Huxley's attitude to sex was largely conditioned by his changing spiritual convictions, which fall into three periods. In the early part of his career, the alternating current of his fascination with mysticism found expression in several ways. On the one hand, Huxley's early heroes, such as Denis Stone and Francis Chelifer, confuse religion and love, and attempt to worship women in the manner of the romantics (who spiritualised sex), and are embittered by the experience; on the other, Huxley was impelled to portray diabolists such as Coleman and Spandrell, who derive sexual pleasure from provoking God with their debauchery. The ascetic phase of Huxley's career was inaugurated by *Eyeless in Gaza* (1936) and lasted approximately fifteen years. During this time, Huxley's heroes, such as Anthony Beavis and Sebastian Barnack, tend to be libertines whose libido perverts their morality; after a deus ex machina (the falling dog and meeting Miller in Mexico for Beavis; the death of Rachel and meeting Rontini in Nice for Barnack) they embrace the mystical path and forswear sex for the foreseeable future. This period is marked by the emergence of a new Huxley character: the celibate guru figure, such as Propter and Rontini, who initiates the Huxley libertine into a mystical conception of life. In the final phase of his career, Huxley's experiments with psychedelics enabled him to perceive *nirvana* in *samsara*, the divine in the mundane, and this breakthrough led him to turn away from the life-denying asceticism of neo-Advaita in favour of the life-affirming creeds of Tantra, and Mahayana and Zen Buddhism. Consequently, for the first time in his fiction, sex is positively portrayed in *Island* (1962), and *maithuna* (the yoga of love) is one of the chief sacraments of Palanese life (the other being the *moksha*-medicine).

The Romantic Phase: From Denis Stone to Brian Foxe

In *Point Counter Point* (1928), Philip Quarles opines that reading poets as a means of sex education has been the downfall of his generation. "In the good old days", he asserts,

> poets began by losing their virginity; and then, with a complete knowledge of the real thing and just where and how it was unpoetical, deliberately

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> set to work to idealize and beautify it. We start with the poetical and proceed to the unpoetical.[1]

Walter Bidlake, Quarles' brother in law, exemplifies the danger of basing one's expectations of love on romantic poetry. He attempts to model his relationship with Marjorie Carling on *Epipsychidion*, a poem in which Shelley's all too human love for Teresa Vivani, Mary Shelley and Claire Clairmont is translated into an ethereal, transcendent register. Believing that "love was spiritual communion and companionship" and that "the sexual business was an irrelevancy", the unfortunate corollary of having a body, Walter had fallen in love with Marjorie's virtue.[2] By and by, though, he perceives that her goodness and purity derive from "a natural coldness, a congenitally low vitality", and, unable to emulate Marjorie's "bloodless spirituality", he begins to pursue Lucy Tantamount, beckoned on by her baseness and impurity.[3] But rather than finding happiness in a frankly carnal liaison with Lucy, he is made doubly miserable: on the one hand, he has to contend with his guilt over Marjorie, who has left her husband for Walter and is now pregnant with his child; on the other, he is made to suffer transports of jealousy over Lucy, who cannot countenance commitment, and moreover relishes her inimical influence over him.

All Huxley's early heroes suffer some kind of romantic disillusionment. In *Crome Yellow* (1921), the gap between Denis Stone's romantic expectations and his forlorn pursuit of Anne Wimbush is a source of comedy. For instance, his first morning at Crome he plans to tell Anne (whom he has depicted as a "Hamadryad" in one of his poems) that she looks "adorable", which he hopes will provoke a coquettish reply, resulting in a "pregnant silence", but Anne forestalls his compliment by informing him that he looks "perfectly sweet" in his white flannel trousers, thereby deflating his romantic designs.[4] It transpires that Denis' allegiance to romantic philosophy has to do with a Puritan squeamishness with respect to pleasure. He tells Anne that he envies her instinctive paganism, whereas he can only approximate her attitude through intellectual arguments borrowed from romanticism: "I can take nothing for granted", he tells her,

> I can enjoy nothing as it comes along. Beauty, pleasure, art, women – I have to invent an excuse, a justification for everything that's delightful.

1 Huxley, *Point Counter Point*, 293.
2 Ibid., 14.
3 Ibid., 14–15.
4 Huxley, *Crome Yellow*, 16–17.

> Otherwise I can't enjoy it with an easy conscience. I make up a little story about beauty and pretend that it has something to do with truth and goodness. I have to say that art is the process by which one reconstructs the divine reality out of chaos. Pleasure is one of the mystical roads to union with the infinite – the ecstasies of drinking, dancing, love-making. As for women, I am perpetually assuring myself that they're the broad highway to divinity. And to think that I'm only just beginning to see through the silliness of the whole thing![5]

Denis' romantic imagination not only ill-prepares him for the pursuit of the too, too solid Anne (to his immense dismay, he proves insufficiently manly to carry her when she twists her ankle), it also leads him to misconstrue her relationship with Gombauld. After the annual fair, he observes them in the moonlit garden engaged in what he assumes is an "endlessly passionate embracement",[6] when in fact Anne is emphatically rebuffing Gombauld's advances, and it is only when Denis announces that he is quitting Crome that he perceives that Anne, having earlier dismissed his strangled declaration of love, has begun to warm to him in light of Gombauld's unwelcome attentions.

The relationship between romantic innocent and hedonistic vamp is reprised in *Antic Hay* (1923), with the difference that Theodore Gumbril briefly succeeds in becoming the lover of Myra Viveash. "Spectrally, a dim, haunting ghost", Gumbril recalls,

> he had hung about her; dumbly, dumbly imploring, appealing. "The weak, silent man," she used to call him. And once for two or three days, out of pity, out of affection, out of a mere desire, perhaps, to lay the tiresome ghost, she had given him what his mournful silence implored – only to take it back, almost as soon as accorded.[7]

In the short term, this leads to excruciations of jealousy; in the long term, Gumbril develops a protective layer of cynicism with respect to relationships. Inspired by Coleman, who grows a "beaver" in order to attract female attention, Gumbril buys a false beard and uses it to cultivate a new, more virile persona, the "Complete Man". In the guise of the Complete Man, Gumbril unwittingly picks up Shearwater's wife, who is also toying with a new persona, the "fastidious lady", a shrewd, sexually venturesome patron of the arts who can take

5 Ibid., 19.
6 Ibid., 162.
7 Huxley, *Antic Hay*, 69.

her pick from a raft of aspiring painters and poets, and their union is a classic example of what Huxley, in the words of D.H. Lawrence, refers to as "sex in the head".[8] It is significant that when Gumbril meets the virginal Emily, who embodies innocence to Myra's experience, Gumbril's romantic hopes revive. At the age of seventeen, the orphan Emily married one of her father's friends, knowing nothing about sex; when her middle-aged husband attempted to claim his conjugal rights, she refused, and his repeated attempts grew more and more violent until he broke a blood vessel in her neck, at which point Emily left him. It is her very sexlessness, as a result of the attempted rape, that leads Gumbril to conceive of her erroneously as some sort of saint: "She was native to that crystal world", he reflects, referring to a kind of nature mysticism, of which he has occasional intimations.[9] At first, his love for Emily appears to be more spiritual than physical; hence, when he spends the night with her, he experiences no desire, for sex would result in disenchantment.[10] But just as he feels the falseness of his Complete Man persona, and finds the unrelievedly carnal nature of his relations with Rosie unsatisfactory, so too he realises that he is not a disembodied lover, and as soon as he succumbs to the temptation of lunch with Myra Viveash, he begins to deprecate his idyll with Emily in Robertsbridge, with its "twiddly lanes", in "a cottage altogether too cottagey", playing piano duets and botanising hand in hand, until, by the end of the evening, he desecrates his relationship with her by retailing it as a ribald anecdote for the amusement of Myra, Coleman and Porteus, whom he admits to his rented rooms (the hallowed site of his evening with Emily).[11]

In *Those Barren Leaves* (1925), Francis Chelifer is another romantic young man who confuses religion and love, and who retreats into an ostentatious cynicism as soon as his love object turns out to be a fickle human being rather than a goddess. While Barbara Waters is an occasionally glimpsed beauty in Chelifer's adolescence, it is easy to idealise her: "I thought of her constantly", he recalls. "All that I read of love in the poets arranged itself significantly round the memory of that lovely and secretly smiling face".[12] When he meets her again, while working at the Air Board in World War I, and begins to court her, he perceives the yawning gap between the spiritualised Barbara of his romantic imagination and the flesh-and-blood woman:

8 See for instance D.H. Lawrence, *Fantasia of the Unconscious*, in *Psychoanalysis and the Unconscious and Fantasia of the Unconscious,* ed. Bruce Steele (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 117. This concept will be examined in detail below.

9 Huxley, *Antic Hay*, 146.

10 See ibid., 154.

11 See ibid., 158–160.

12 Huxley, *Those Barren Leaves*, 116.

> The weeks passed. I saw her almost every day. And every day I loved her more violently and painfully, with a love that less and less resembled the religious passion of my boyhood. But it was the persistent memory of that passion which made my present desire so parching and tormenting, that filled me with thirst that no possible possession could assuage. No possible possession, since whatever I might possess, as I realized more and more clearly each time I saw her, would be utterly different from what I had desired all these years to possess. I had desired all beauty, all that exists of goodness and truth, symbolized and incarnate in one face.[13]

Indeed, Chelifer discovers that not only is Barbara not a goddess, she is a reprehensible human being: selfish, stupid, narcissistic and duplicitous. It comes as an unpleasant shock that his purely personal objections to her are far outweighed by his physical desire:

> In Barbara's company I was learning [...] that it is possible to be profoundly and slavishly in love with some one for whom one has no esteem, whom one does not like, whom one regards as a bad character and who, finally, not only makes one unhappy but bores one.[14]

When Chelifer finally sleeps with her he experiences a mixture of sensual gratification and spiritual remorse. He also has to contend with jealousy, since Barbara is being assiduously courted by a "swarthy Syrian" poet.[15] As he keeps vigil outside Barbara's flat for an incriminating glimpse of herself and the Syrian, Chelifer reflects that just as the Barbara of his imagination has been proved false by the living, breathing woman, so his political ideals, evidently derived from romantic thinkers such as Shelley, are incompatible with reality: "I thought of my passion for universal justice", he recalls,

> of my desire that all men should be free, leisured, educated, of my imaginations of a future earth peopled by human beings who should live according to reason. But of what use is leisure, when leisure is occupied with listening-in and going to football matches? freedom, when men voluntarily enslave themselves to politicians like those who now rule the world? education, when the literate read the evening papers and the fiction magazines?[16]

13 Ibid., 123–124.
14 Ibid., 124.
15 Ibid., 129.
16 Ibid., 131.

Chelifer's humiliation is made complete when, after spying Barbara and the Syrian entering her flat after an evening out, he not only says nothing about what he has seen, but begs her to have dinner with him the next time they meet.

Most men, Chelifer muses, suffer from a "primeval animal stupidity", and even the exceptions, the writers and intellectuals, "live in a world of bright falsehoods", shunning the "real world".[17] Hence he resolves to embrace the real world, rather than romantic chimeras, in the form of Gog's Court (the office of *The Rabbit Fancier's Gazette*, where he takes the job of editor after the war), and Miss Carruther's boarding house in Chelsea (where he revels in the vulgar commerce of his fellow lodgers), and begins writing disillusioned, modernist poetry.

The incompatibility of romantic ideals and reality is given poignant expression in Huxley's poem, "The Defeat of Youth" (1918). The form of the poem is significant, in that sonnet sequences were associated with troubadour poetry, in which the poet's love for his lady was doomed to go forever unfulfilled, and therefore he was at liberty to celebrate her perfect beauty, modesty and virtue, without fear of being disabused by intimate contact with her. According to Alan Watts, the tradition of courtly love provided the "entire basis of the Western notion of ideal or romantic love".[18] It is, then, this tradition that is responsible for the unnamed youth's misapprehension of love as a wholly spiritual emotion.

The youth's love for the girl comes with the swiftness and force of an epiphany:

> She leans, and there is laughter in the face
> She turns towards him; and it seems a door
> Suddenly opened on some desolate place
> With a burst of light and music. What before
> Was hidden shines in loveliness revealed.
> Now first he sees her beautiful, and knows
> That he must love her.[19]

But being a romantic, his love is painful, "for love is infinite discontent / With the poor lonely life of transient things" (3.13-14). The speaker then begins to

17 Ibid., 132.

18 Alan Watts, *Nature, Man, and Woman* (London: Wildwood House, 1973), 171.

19 Aldous Huxley, "The Defeat of Youth", in *The Defeat of Youth, and Other Poems* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1918), sonnet 3, lines 1–6, 6. Subsequent citations from the poem will be provided in parentheses in the text.

propound a sort of Wordsworthian nature mysticism, which represents the youth's romantic beliefs:

> Men see their god, an immanence divine,
> Smile through the curve of flesh or moulded clay,
> In bare ploughed lands that go sloping away
> To meet the sky in one clean exquisite line. (4.1-4)

The next stanza draws both on Blake's *Marriage of Heaven and Hell* ("Man has no body distinct from his soul") and Keats' "Ode on a Grecian Urn" ("Beauty is truth, truth beauty"):

> One spirit shapes the subtle rhythms of thought
> And the long thundering seas; the soul is wrought
> Of one stuff with the body – matter and mind
> Woven together in so close a mesh
> That flowers may blossom into a song, that flesh
> May strangely teach the loveliest holiest things
> To watching spirits. Truth is brought to birth
> Not in some vacant heaven: its beauty springs
> From the dear bosom of material earth. (5.6-14)

These ideas encourage the youth to regard the object of his love as divine. Jerome Meckier argues that the clumsy hyperbole of "loveliest holiest things" indicates that Huxley is parodying the romantic poets that deceived the youth about the nature of love.[20]

In the hayloft, the youth, while wondering whether he dare "kiss her face" or whether she is "pedestalled above the touch / Of his desire", is shocked when the girl takes the initiative and kisses him on the cheek (7.8-12). As if in expiation for this sensual moment, the youth goes mountain climbing; for a moment he contemplates suicide:

> And if he should let go,
> What would he find down there, down there below
> The curtain of the mist? What would he find
> Beyond the dim and stifling now and here,

20 Jerome Meckier, *Aldous Huxley, From Poet to Mystic* (Berlin: LIT Verlag, 2011), 78.

Beneath the unsettled turmoil of his mind?
Oh, there were nameless depths: he shrank with fear.[21] (8.9-14)

Mountains are eloquent of the sublime in romantic poetry, and the youth derives consolation from them: "Like some prophetic cloak / The spirit of the mountains has descended / On all the world, and its unrest is ended" (9.8-10).

The youth's serenity is short-lived, though, and in the girl's room he struggles to adhere to his romantic ideals after she effectively surrenders to him and his libido bursts upon the scene:

But passion ambushed by the aerial shrine
Comes forth to dance, a hoofed obscenity,
His satyr's dance, with laughter in his eye,
And cruelty along the scarlet line
Of his bright smiling mouth. All uncontrolled,
Love's rebel servant, he delights to beat
The maddening quick dry rhythm of goatish feet
Even in the sanctuary, and makes bold
To mime himself the godhead of the place. (15.1-9)

In the previous sonnet, the youth had thought that to "gently kiss her brow and hair and eyes / Seems love perfected", and the intrusion of sexual desire shatters the romantic illusion of mystical unity and forces him to confront a Manichean world of duality between mind and body, love and lust, life and art, which, Meckier argues, has been foreshadowed in the poem by the dualities of light and dark, inside and outside.[22] Fearing that the girl will "body forth in palpable shame / Those dreams and longings that his blood, aflame [...] had dreamed", he runs away (16.8-11).

Sonnet XVII, titled "In the Park" is ambiguous:

Laughing, "To-night," I said to him, "the Park
Has turned the garden of a symbolist.
Those old great trees that rise above the mist,
Gold with the light of evening, and the dark
Still water, where the dying sun evokes

21 Meckier argues that the "nameless depths" are also a metaphor for the dark sensual side of his psyche that he is too afraid to explore. See ibid., 79.

22 See ibid., 81.

An echoed glory – here I recognize
Those ancient gardens mirrored by the eyes
Of poets that hate the world of common folks,
Like you and me and that thin pious crowd,
Which yonder sings its hymns, so humbly proud
Of holiness. The garden of escape
Lies here; a small green world, and still the bride
Of quietness, although an imminent rape
Roars ceaselessly about on every side". (17.1-14)

Meckier contends that it is the girl who speaks, but that would mean that she is the speaker of the poem, which seems improbable, given her unfettered access to the youth's inner life.[23] Moreover, the youth has just fled from the girl in the previous sonnet and thus it seems more likely that he has sought out a friend, who attempts to divert the youth's mind from his ambivalent feelings towards the girl. I would argue that the speaker of the poem and the "I" in the sonnet above is a stand-in for the author, whose poetic imagination leads him to represent the park to the youth as akin to "Those ancient gardens" that poets, spurning the real world, have written about. Meckier suggests that the girl is alluding to "The Garden" by Andrew Marvell, a poem which celebrates the solitude and serenity of middle age, after youthful "passion" has passed, ushering in a life of contemplation. Marvell's speaker likens himself to Adam before the advent of Eve:

Such was that happy Garden-state,
While Man there walked without a Mate:
After a place, so pure and sweet,
What other Help could yet be meet!
But 'twas beyond a Mortal's share
To wander solitary there:
Two Paradises 'twere in one
To live in Paradise alone.[24]

Meckier claims that the girl has forgotten this stanza, and inadvertently taunts the youth, who "would also prefer being solitary in paradise if he could regain his former innocence and peace of mind".[25]

23 See ibid., 83.

24 Andrew Marvell, "The Garden", in *The Poems of Andrew Marvell*, ed. Nigel Smith, rev. ed. (Harlow: Pearson Education, 2007), 158.

25 Meckier, *From Poet to Mystic*, 83.

Another possibility is that the speaker is evoking the *locus amoenus* (pleasant place), which makes its first appearance as Calypso's Cave in the *Odyssey*, and subsequently became a *topos* of pastoral poetry, and can be seen for example in The Bower of Bliss and the Garden of Adonis in Spencer's *Faerie Queene*. The three identifying features of the *locus amoenus* are trees, grass and water, all of which are afforded by the park.[26] While the *locus amoenus* is conventionally conceived as a safe haven, it is inverted in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, where it is the site of several attempted rapes, such as Apollo and Daphne, Pan and Syrinx. This may be what the speaker means when he says that "an imminent rape / Roars ceaselessly about on every side" of the "garden of escape", rather than referring, as Meckier claims, to "passers-by whose lack of sensibility threatens the park's continued existence".[27] Having conjured forth the *locus amoenus*, the speaker is "content / To drink the transient beauty as it sped / Out of eternal darkness", in other words the realm of the poetic imagination, "into time", but the illusion cannot long survive "the denser air / Of our material earth", and leads the speaker to a poetic "despair" about the prosaic nature of the world (18.3-10).

For the youth, the "garden of escape" evoked by the speaker is a place of "magic peace" to which he feels "A stranger". He is tormented by the "yearning glimpses" it provides of "a life at rest / In perfect beauty". Meanwhile, in the world of "Glitter-eyed" women he is buffeted by the "wind / Of scattering passion" and experiences the "sickening heart-beat of desire" (19.2-12). From here, he falls into "Self-Torment":

> All his high love for her, his fair desire,
> Loses its light; and a dull rancorous fire,
> Burning darkness and bitterness that prey
> Upon his heart are left. His spirit burns
> Sometimes with hatred, or the hatred turns
> To a fierce lust for her, more cruel than hate. (20.6-11)

In the next stanza, the speaker says of the youth: "Hating and hated now, he stands alone, / An island-point, measureless gulfs apart / From other lives" (21.11-12). This, as Meckier points out, is "the human condition Huxley's novels

26 For the *locus amoenus*, see David Evett, "'Paradice's Only Map': The 'Topos' of the 'Locus Amoenus' and the Structure of Marvell's 'Upon Appleton House'", *PMLA* 85, no. 3 (1970): 504–513.

27 Meckier, *From Poet to Mystic*, 83.

explore".[28] In the final sonnet, "The Quarry in the Wood", the youth returns to the site of his *coup de foudre* in order to hang himself:

> Tears of pain and shame,
> And lips that once had laughed and sung and kissed
> Trembling in the passion of his sobbing breath!
> The world a candle shuddering to its death,
> And life a darkness, blind and utterly void
> Of any love or goodness: all deceit,
> This friendship and this God: all shams destroyed,
> And truth seen now.
> Earth fails beneath his feet. (22.7-14)

"The Defeat of Youth" was evidently inspired by Huxley's brother Trevenen, who committed suicide in the wake of an affair with one of the family's servants. According to Julian Huxley, Trevenen had attempted to educate the girl by taking her to the theatre, concerts and public lectures.[29] Bedford notes that Trevenen "had an ascetic streak, detesting jokes and boys' talk about sex, and an inclination to subdue his instincts by his principles".[30] He was therefore distressed that his love for the housemaid had a sexual component that he was not strong enough to resist. Dunaway maintains that one of the family's faithful retainers knew about the affair, and forced them to part, foreseeing that the girl would never be accepted in the Huxleys' social milieu.[31] For Trevenen, the conflict engendered by this relationship and its painful break-up, in addition to his second in Greats from Oxford and his failure in the civil service examination, culminated in a clinical depression and he was sent to a nursing home in Surrey to recuperate. While there, he received a letter from the girl informing him that she was pregnant.[32] This constituted the final blow for Trevenen, who went into the nearby woods and hanged himself from a tree.

Trevenen's suicide was one of the formative crises of Huxley's childhood. The earlier tragedies, namely his mother's death from cancer and his attack of *keratitis punctata*, are often blamed for the pessimism of Huxley's early work.[33]

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28 Ibid., 85.

29 See Julian Huxley, *Memories*, 1: 97.

30 Bedford, *Aldous Huxley*, 40.

31 See Dunaway, *Huxley in Hollywood*, 26.

32 See ibid. Dunaway cites interviews with both Rosalind Bruce (Huxley's step mother) and Sybille Bedford for this information.

33 See for instance Murray, *Aldous Huxley*, 27 and Julian Huxley, *Memories*, 1: 65.

Huxley may well be implicitly including himself among the cynics, when he writes to his cousin Gervas in the aftermath of Trevenen's death:

> There is – apart from the sheer grief of the loss – an added pain in the cynicism of the situation. It is just the highest and best in Trev – his ideals – which have driven him to his death – while there are thousands, who shelter their weakness from the same fate by a cynical, unidealistic outlook on life. Trev was not strong, but he had the courage to face life with ideals – and his ideals were too much for him.[34]

Dunaway, noting the absence of "joyous heterosexuality" in Huxley's oeuvre, and the myriad "instances of the destructive power of sex and the emotional poison of affairs", posits that Trevenen's death might be the cause.[35] Certainly there seems little doubt that Huxley's hostility towards romanticism in his early work derives in some measure from his brother's suicide. Moreover, there is a countervailing determination to portray sexual relationships realistically, as they are on earth rather than in the empyrean of romantic poetry, and without drawing a decorous Victorian veil over the unseemly details. In an essay entitled "Moral and Immoral" (1927), Huxley reports his delight on learning that one of his books – *Antic Hay* – has been burnt by the Library of Alexandria for its immorality.[36] "It is on young minds", Huxley argues,

> brought up to believe that the manifestations of the sexual instinct are somehow criminal, that "immoral" literature, art, and science exercise a deleterious influence. Their interest in "immoral" things – an interest that is natural and strong, arising as it does from a deep instinctive source – is branded by their right thinking elders and (as a result of suggestion) by their conscience as wicked. A conflict is set up in their minds – a conflict that wastes their nervous energy, renders their lives miserable and ends only too frequently in neurasthenia or some other form or mental derangement.[37]

It was not merely romanticism, though, that was responsible for the debasement of the body, religion was also to blame. In *Eyeless in Gaza*, Mrs Foxe inculcates in her son Brian a rigid Christian morality. Consequently, Brian feels

34 Smith, *Letters*, 61–62.

35 Dunaway, *Huxley in Hollywood*, 141–142.

36 According to Alexander Henderson, this was a canard. See Watt, *Critical Heritage*, 278n11.

37 Aldous Huxley, "Moral and Immoral", in *CE* 2: 84.

ashamed of desiring his fiancée Joan "in the wrong way, physically" as opposed to spiritually.[38] He experiences remorse over kissing Joan and tells Anthony of his "humiliating" inability to "gain the mastery of his body" and "to banish all the low desires" that are "unworthy" of his love.[39] He refuses his mother's offer of a loan to enable him to marry, and avoids Joan, lest he succumb to the temptation of prenuptial intimacy, by working full-time for a newspaper as well as writing his thesis. On holiday with Anthony in Langdale, Brian forces himself to take gruelling walks, thereby punishing his body for its base and insubordinate demands. On discovering that Anthony has seduced Joan, he blames himself for making her miserable by forcing her to wait until he could afford to marry (thereby making her susceptible to Anthony's advances). Feeling guilty over Joan and distraught at the unfathomable malice of his best friend's behaviour, Brian commits suicide.

In a letter to his step mother (November 1936), Huxley admits that Brian's stammer and his "ascetic obsession" were based on his brother Trevenen.[40] John Sutherland asserts that Mrs Foxe is a fictional portrait of Mrs Humphry Ward (Huxley's aunt), and that "allusions to Stocks" (her Hertfordshire home), and "Mrs Foxe's physical mannerisms make the identity […] unmistakable".[41] Brian ends up committing suicide because he cannot emulate Mrs Foxe's goodness. "Does Huxley imply", Sutherland asks, "that guilt fostered by Mrs Ward's goodness drove his luckless brother to hang himself when he fell so far below his aunt's moral standards?"[42] This seems unlikely, since while Huxley took occasional snipes at his aunt's literary standards in his private correspondence,[43] he continued to visit her at Stocks and betrayed no ill-will towards her. Moreover if, as Sutherland maintains, Richard Greenow's alter ego Pearl Bellairs "is a hilarious (and transparent) spoof of Mrs Humphry Ward",[44] it was because Huxley objected to her war propaganda, rather than because he blamed her for his brother's death.

"It was Rousseau," Huxley writes in "Fashions in Love",

> who first started the cult of passion for passion's sake. Before his time the great passions, such as that of Paris for Helen […] had been regarded

38 Huxley, *Eyeless*, 168–169.
39 Ibid., 340–341.
40 Smith, *Letters*, 409.
41 John Sutherland, *Mrs Humphry Ward: Eminent Victorian, Pre-eminent Edwardian* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 339.
42 Ibid.
43 E.g. complaining to his father of "the usual politico-Debrett clap-trap" in the serialisation of *Lady Connie* (1916) in a letter from November 1915 (see Smith, *Letters*, 86).
44 Sutherland, *Mrs Humphry Ward*, 201.

> rather as disastrous maladies than as enviable states of soul. Rousseau, followed by all the romantic poets of France and England, transformed the grand passion from what it had been in the Middle Ages – a demoniac possession – into a divine ecstasy, and promoted it from the rank of a disease to that of the only true and natural form of love. The nineteenth-century conception of love was thus doubly mystical, with the mysticism of Christian asceticism and sacramentalism, and with the romantic mysticism of Nature. It claimed an absolute Rightness on the grounds of its divinity and of its naturalness.[45]

In *Eyeless in Gaza*, Brian suffers from this "doubly mystical" conception of love. Unable to experience love for her husband, Mrs Foxe instils in her son the compensatory belief that love is "wonderful, holy, a revelation".[46] "Love's a kind of philosopher's stone", she tells him. "Not only does it deliver us; it also transforms. Dross into gold. Earth in heaven".[47] At first, it is easy for Brian to persuade himself that his love for Joan is divine, and that the world is a reflection and expression of their love. For instance, while walking with Joan in Winchelsea marshes, it "seemed to [Brian] that they were walking through the image of their love. The world was their love, and their love the world", and the "proof of God's goodness" was "manifest in their happiness".[48] Hence Brian is distressed when his "infinite love" is sullied by sexual desire.

Huxley's taste in literature reflects his disdain for the various doctrines that falsely spiritualised love or demonised the body. In *On the Margin* (1923), Huxley chastises Wordsworth for his fallacious "philosophy of the emotions".[49] Conversely, he praises Chaucer for his earthiness and bawdiness, and his aversion to "celibacy and asceticism".[50] In *Do What You Will* (1929), he rails against Swift's puritanism and his execration of the body.[51] In contrast, Huxley applauds Rabelais for his life-affirming approach to excrement: "The muck," he writes,

> is transfigured by love; for Rabelais loved the bowels which Swift so malignantly hated. His was the true *amor fati*: he accepted reality in its entirety, accepted with gratitude and delight this amazingly improbable world, where flowers spring from manure [...] where the singers of the

45 Aldous Huxley, "Fashions in Love", in *CE* 2: 344–345.
46 Huxley, *Eyeless*, 168.
47 Ibid., 169.
48 Ibid., 145.
49 Aldous Huxley, "A Wordsworth Anthology", in *CE* 1: 108.
50 Aldous Huxley, "Chaucer", in *CE* 1: 130.
51 See Aldous Huxley, "Swift", in *CE* 2: 29.

> most mystically spiritual love, such as Dante, Petrarch, and Cavalcanti, have wives and rows of children; and where the violences of animal passion can give birth to sentiments of the most exquisite tenderness and refinement. In this most beautiful, ridiculous, and tragic world Swift has no part: he is shut out from it by hatred, by his childish resentment against reality for not being entirely different from what, in fact it, it is.[52]

In "Vulgarity in Literature", Huxley ridicules Villiers de L'Isle-Adam, who championed the superiority of imagination over reality in *Axël* (1890). Huxley slightly misquotes the play's most famous line ("*Vivre? Nos valets le feront pour nous*"), then adds:

> For, oh, the vulgarity of it! The vulgarity of this having to walk and talk; to open and close the eyes; to think and drink and every day, yes, every day, to eat, eat and excrete. And then this having to pursue the female of one's species, or the male, whichever the case may be, this having to cerebrate, to calculate, to copulate, to propagate. … No, no – too gross, too stupidly low. Such things, as Villiers de L'Isle-Adam says, are all very well for footmen.[53]

Huxley satirised this attitude in his depiction of the swooning, etiolated Lapith sisters in *Crome Yellow*, who ostentatiously shrink from eating, judging food to be too "coarse" and "unspiritual", while gourmandising in secret.[54] In "Vulgarity", having dispensed with Villiers de L'Isle-Adam, Huxley excoriates the "Manichaeans" of French literature for their fastidious refusal to have any truck with the body. By pretending that man was a wholly rational being, they were able to achieve "a certain universality of statement impossible to those who attempt to reproduce the particularities and incompletenesses of actual corporeal life".[55] But, Huxley argues, one cannot simply subtract the body from the human equation for the sake of formal elegance; on the contrary, literature must investigate the mysterious relationship between mind and body. As a result of attempting to do this in "plain English" and in the novel form, as opposed to employing "Graeco-Latin jargon" in a "medical textbook", Huxley confides that he has been accused of "vulgarity and of wickedness".[56]

52 Ibid.
53 Aldous Huxley, "Vulgarity in Literature", in *CE* 3: 23.
54 See Huxley, *Crome Yellow*, 102.
55 Huxley, "Vulgarity in Literature", in *CE* 3: 27.
56 Ibid., 28–29.

Huxley was as critical of the twentieth century incarnation of love as he was of the romantic version of it. In "Fashions in Love", he laments the demystification and secularisation of sex at the hands of Freud and Havelock Ellis. "Love", he writes,

> has ceased to be the rather fearful, mysterious thing it was, and become a perfectly normal, almost commonplace, activity – an activity, for many young people, especially in America, of the same nature as dancing or tennis, a sport, a recreation, a pastime.[57]

Love is born of the conflict between the instincts and the resistance imposed by ethics and religion; as a result of the reaction against Victorian values, and the removal of ethical restraints, the post-war generation has had to make do with a "cold, unimpassioned indulgence".[58] As a remedy Huxley proposes D.H. Lawrence's "new mythology of nature".[59] "The restraints which Mr. Lawrence would impose on sexual impulse", Huxley writes,

> so as to transform it into love, are not the restraints of religious spirituality. They are restraints of a more fundamental, less artificial nature – emotional, not intellectual. The impulse is to be restrained from promiscuous manifestations because, if it were not, promiscuity would "harden all within and petrify the feeling".[60] The restraint is of the same personal nature as the impulse. The conflict is between a part of the personality and the personality as an organized whole.[61]

Another regrettable consequence of the rejection of Victorian values was what Lawrence, in *Fantasia of the Unconscious* (1922), dubbed "sex in the head".[62] In an essay from 1928, Huxley notes that modern sexuality is

57 Huxley, "Fashions in Love", in *CE* 2: 346.

58 Ibid.

59 Ibid., 347.

60 This is from a quatrain by Robert Burns Huxley quoted earlier in the essay: "I waive the quantum of the sin, / The hazard of concealing; / But oh! it hardens all within / And petrifies the feeling".

61 Huxley, "Fashions in Love", in *CE* 2: 347.

62 "Why were we driven out of Paradise?" he writes. "Not because we sinned, but because we got our sex into our head. When Eve ate that particular apple, she became aware of her own womanhood, mentally. And mentally she began to experiment with it. She has been experimenting ever since. So has man. To the rage and horror of both of them". Lawrence, *Fantasia of the Unconscious*, 117.

characterised by its clinical self-awareness.[63] Mary Bracegirdle in *Crome Yellow* is a good example of this new hygienic attitude to sex. She confides to Anne her fear of the psychological consequences of sexual repression. She has begun to have transparently Freudian dreams that express her desire for intercourse, such as "falling down wells" and "climbing up ladders".[64] Resolving to divest herself of her virginity forthwith, Mary assesses her potential mates at Crome in terms of Darwinian sexual selection, choosing the "civilized" Denis over Gombauld, who, in spite of his artistic talent, has a "dangerous heredity", given that his family hail from Marseilles.[65] Women are particularly anxious to live consciously, Huxley notes in the same essay, because their role has traditionally been associated with child-rearing and the instincts, hence they are eager to prove their intelligence, reason and efficiency. A less sympathetic example of sex in the head is provided by Lucy Tantamount in *Point Counter Point*. After the sheepish Walter has finally seduced her through a display of unwonted assertiveness, he reverts to a more romantic mode of love and treats her as "a sort of combined child, mother and mistress".[66] But Lucy does not requite his passion. "She did not", the narrator notes,

> want to feel that deep tenderness which is a surrender of the will, a breaking down of personal separateness. She wanted to be herself, Lucy Tantamount, in full command of the situation, enjoying herself consciously to the last limit, ruthlessly having her fun; free, not only financially and legally, but emotionally too – emotionally free to have him or not to have him. To drop him as she had taken him, at any moment, whenever she liked. She had no wish to surrender herself.[67]

It should not be supposed, however, that only Huxley's female characters exhibit sex in the head. For instance, in the same novel Spandrell is left cold by "all the possible refinements of vice", and can only find satisfaction by consciously corrupting young women.[68] He is a "reverse ascetic" who expresses his hatred of female flesh by teaching Harriet "fantastic lubricities", and then, having let her assume that these "evil" acts are normal, allows her to glimpse his fierce revulsion and shows her some "pornographic French etchings", in which "all the actions [Harriet] had so innocently and warm-heartedly accepted as

63 See Aldous Huxley, "The Battle of the Sexes", in *CE* 2: 114.
64 Huxley, *Crome Yellow*, 32.
65 Ibid., 34.
66 Huxley, *Point Counter Point*, 206.
67 Ibid., 208.
68 Ibid., 226.

love [were] represented in cold and lucid outlines and made to look so hideous, so low, so bottomlessly vulgar that but to glance was to hate and despise the whole human race".[69] In *Antic Hay*, the diabolic Coleman, unlike Spandrell, actually seems to enjoy sex, but employs a Manichaean worldview to lend the act a cosmic significance, and positively relishes the idea that intercourse is a "sin against the Holy Ghost".[70]

Huxley's depiction of sex in his work was also influenced, over and above his religious convictions, by his own experiences. Nicholas Murray portrays Huxley as a Lothario figure, fully at ease in the bohemian milieu, where fidelity was considered old-fashioned and sex was frankly discussed at the dinner table. After briefly describing Huxley's "sexual initiation" in the summer of 1913 with a girl he picked up on the street ("whom he assumed to be an au pair on her evening off" but was possibly a prostitute), Murray writes that this was but the start "of a very active sexual career".[71] Huxley's adolescence, however, proved to be conventionally frustrating and ill-starred in this respect. His ardour for the violinist Jelly d'Aranyi (whom Julian Huxley had met after she played a concert at Balliol College), went unrequited. Julian notes that he and both his brothers were besotted by her, but adds that she never married and "achieved firm religious faith".[72] At Garsington, his future wife Maria Nys was not the only girl who appealed to Huxley. In her memoirs, Ottoline Morrell writes that in the summer of 1916 Huxley "seemed to be rather in love with [Dora] Carrington".[73] At this time, she was also being pursued by Mark Gertler and Philip Morrell, and in the winter of 1916 she slept with Gertler, while Morrell was merely anxious that she should surrender her virginity.[74] In a letter to Dorothy Brett (December 1918), long after Huxley's engagement to Maria (circa the autumn of 1916), he confides that he loses his heart every time he sees Carrington but recovers it as soon as she is absent.[75]

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69 Ibid., 227.

70 Huxley, *Antic Hay*, 219–220.

71 Murray, *Aldous Huxley*, 36. Murray notes Huxley's surprise at the girl's "boldness of approach". Although he does not raise the possibility of the girl being a prostitute, he praises the "sensitivity and tact" of Bedford's account (the story derives from Gervas Huxley). The situation is similar to Sebastian Barnack's sexual initiation in *Time Must Have a Stop*: after picking up a prostitute and having sex with her in his father's house, the prostitute doubles her rate, forcing Sebastian to borrow money from one of the servants.

72 Julian Huxley, *Memories*, 1: 60–61.

73 Ottoline Morrell, *Ottoline at Garsington: Memoirs of Lady Ottoline Morrell 1915–1918*, ed. Robert Gathorne-Hardy (London: Faber, 1974), 203.

74 See Gretchen Gerzina, *Carrington: A Life* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1989), 84, 100.

75 See Smith, *Letters*, 172.

As for the love of Huxley's life, Maria Nys, when they first met at Garsington she was in love with Ottoline Morrell. In a letter to Edward Sackville-West, a month after Morrell's death, she wrote: "I dare-say you don't know how much she was to my life. In spite of the agonies of those young loves, it was my greatest".[76] On April 16, 1915, fearing that she was to be parted from Morrell, Maria had attempted suicide.[77] While silent in her memoirs on the subject of Maria's love for her, Morrell records her doubt regarding Maria's love for Huxley.[78] Judging from the letters Maria wrote after her departure from England (she had gone to Florence in January 1917 to rejoin her family, who had been in exile from their Belgium home since the outbreak of World War I), Maria's love for Morrell was far stronger than that for her fiancé.[79] For instance, on February 1, 1917, she tepidly declares "I care for A so much".[80] Ten days later, she confides to Morrell that she writes "*friendly letters*" to Huxley, and that, while she is looking forward to his visit, "he *must be* a friend".[81]

Morrell reports that after Maria's departure, Huxley was depressed and pined for Maria, who wrote to him infrequently, and appeared to be fine without him.[82] Meanwhile, in June, Maria had gone to Forte dei Marmi on the Tuscan coast with Costanza da Fasola, the daughter of a professor at the University of Florence (who was a friend of Maria's uncle, George Baltus).[83] In a letter to Morrell, Maria describes their habit of swimming in the nude and encloses two pictures of them both posing naked in the grounds of the villa they had to themselves. After Morrell wrote to Maria chiding her for toying with Huxley's affections, her reply is eloquent of her ambivalence: "I am certain about Aldous – I care for him very much – more now – I think I always did really – only sometimes I care for no-one – and can't bear him".[84]

Dunaway suggests that Maria and Costanza were "probably" lovers, though he wrongly imagines that this putative affair took place before Maria went to

76 Quoted in Seymour, *Ottoline Morrell*, 280.

77 See ibid., 299.

78 See Morrell, *Ottoline at Garsington*, 203.

79 See for instance the letter from January 1917 quoted in Murray, *Aldous Huxley*, 72, in which Maria states that life "is not possible without you", i.e. Morrell, and declares "my love for you is so great" etc.

80 Quoted in ibid., 87. Since her letters to Huxley (and his to her) were destroyed in the fire that engulfed their Los Angeles home in 1961, it is necessary to rely on her letters to Morrell.

81 Quoted in ibid., 88; her italics.

82 Morrell, *Ottoline at Garsington*, 204.

83 See Murray, *Aldous Huxley*, 87–88, who states that Maria and Costanza were alone.

84 Quoted in ibid., 89.

stay with the Morrells at Garsington (circa spring 1915).[85] There is no doubt, however, that Maria was bisexual; and she was closely connected with Costanza throughout her time in Italy, not just at Forte, but in Florence (whence the Nyses returned after Forte, staying in a villa opposite the Fasolas), as well as a holiday with Costanza in Capri.[86] Bedford, in response to an allegation by Stan Lauryssens that Huxley and Maria had had a marriage of convenience, told the *Sunday Telegraph*: "Maria was bisexual and she did have a series of short-term passionate relationships with other people while she was married to Aldous. But we are talking about one or two relationships … They were sophisticated people".[87] Dunaway goes further by contending that Maria was homosexual: "'My sister was a lesbian,' Jeanne Neveux [Maria's sister] said directly".[88] In an unpublished interview Dunaway conducted for his book, Maria's youngest sister Rose de Haulleville states: "Let me tell you: Maria was lesbian". She goes on to speak of Maria's love for Ottoline Morrell. When asked why Maria married Huxley given her sexual orientation, she replies: "I've wondered also. Aldous was such an extraordinary man, and I think he was the one who fell in love with Maria, and she naturally went for it".[89] Dunaway quotes Huxley's Californian friend Peggy Kiskadden as saying: "Maria – like a whole generation of European women of sophistication – never saw the connection between sex and marriage".[90]

Many years later, Maria told her son that she had not been in love with Huxley at Garsington;[91] however, her feelings evidently underwent a change during their two years of separation: "You must know", she writes to Morrell in 1919, "how much my love for A has grown during these two years – how much my life has been only part of his and how all I did was only in view of when we would be together – to be up to him – to be able to help him".[92] Even at Garsington, she told Matthew, she and Huxley intuited that they would spend their lives together, with Maria regarding her role as helpmeet rather than

85 See Dunaway, *Huxley in Hollywood*, 91. According to Bedford, Madame Nys and "her three younger children" (Maria was the eldest of four daughters) first visited Forte dei Marmi in 1916, where they socialised with the Fasolas, and the following year, this time accompanied by Maria, they "returned to Forte for the summer". See Bedford, *Aldous Huxley*, 86–87.

86 See Bedford, *Aldous Huxley*, 93, 99.

87 Quoted in Murray, *Aldous Huxley*, 140.

88 Dunaway, *Huxley in Hollywood*, 12.

89 Rose also claims that Maria and Sybille Bedford were lovers. See the Aldous Huxley Oral History Papers, HM56881, The Huntington Library, San Marino.

90 Dunaway, *Huxley in Hollywood*, 92.

91 See Bedford, *Aldous Huxley*, 517.

92 Quoted in Murray, *Aldous Huxley*, 113.

lover.[93] And, indeed, once they were married, Maria acted as Huxley's companion, cook, chauffeur, secretary, literary critic and psychologist. There was no question of her devotion to her husband; whether or not they enjoyed a sexual relationship is moot. Dunaway writes that Huxley and Maria "rarely shared a bedroom".[94] Stan Lauryssens, in his non-fiction novel *My Brave New World: The Life and Loves of Maria and Aldous Huxley* (2017), which he based on the two thousand letters Maria wrote to her sisters archived in the Albertina Royal Library in Brussels, reports that Maria had several abortions that resulted in chronic anaemia, and portrays Huxley as indifferent to Maria's protestations of love.[95] On the one hand, since this is a novel it cannot be considered reliable – for example, Lauryssens finesses the chronology to make it appear that Huxley and Lawrence were at Garsington at the same time, when this was not the case; on the other hand, given the way in which Lauryssens brazenly appropriates Huxley's work and letters and artlessly presents it as dialogue, it does not seem as if he's made anything up.

In her biography, Bedford describes Maria's role as pander for her husband, who lacked the patience and tact for courtship.[96] Bedford's reasons for Maria's behaviour seem somewhat disingenuous: "Maria thought that he enjoyed such distractions, needed the change and his mind taken off his work".[97] Granted, there were many examples of open marriages in the Huxleys' bohemian circle, but in practice these were always fraught with difficulties. For example, Ottoline Morrell, despite her well-known affair with Bertrand Russell (among others), was still distraught by the discovery that her husband had two mistresses, his secretary Alice Smith and Morrell's former maid Eva Merrifield, and that both of them were pregnant.[98] Juliette Huxley was devastated by her husband's affair with a young American girl, and only agreed to an open marriage under duress. As a result of her husband's infidelity, Juliette became ill, and, if her account is to be believed, only began an affair of her own at the urging of her female doctor.[99] What is striking about the Huxleys' open marriage is that, notwithstanding the affair with Nancy Cunard (which will be examined

93 See Bedford, *Aldous Huxley*, 517.

94 See Dunaway, *Huxley in Hollywood*, 44.

95 See Lauryssens, *My Brave New World*, chap. 2. The following tirade from Maria gives a good example of the book: "Do I play a part in your life? From your point of view? You need me for your sex, now and then, quick quick, let's get it over with, and you busy yourself in your books again. And I – I can go to Paris again for another little abortion. I am tired of little abortions, Aldous, they make me PUKE!"

96 See Bedford, *Aldous Huxley*, 295.

97 Ibid.

98 See Seymour, *Ottoline Morrell*, 282–283.

99 See Juliette Huxley, *Leaves of the Tulip Tree* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 145.

presently), it was so free from jealousy and recrimination. Even in America, when Huxley was writing *Time Must Have a Stop* (1944) and compiling *The Perennial Philosophy* (1945), Maria continued to procure alluring women for her husband, and was involved in the clandestine Hollywood lesbian scene (known as the "Sewing Circles").[100] Perhaps it was precisely because their love was largely platonic that Maria could play the pander for Huxley; and perhaps, for his part, Huxley could regard Maria's affairs with equanimity knowing they were with women rather than men.

Murray suggests that Huxley's avowed disapproval of modern sexual mores borders on the hypocritical. He quotes from the novella "Two or Three Graces", in which the narrator overhears a young man at a party in an artist's studio saying: "We're absolutely modern, we are. Anybody can have my wife, so far as I'm concerned. I don't care. She's free. And I'm free. That's what I call modern".[101] Murray adds that "Huxley's readers – who would have of course no idea about his private life – would take it that he was condemning such attitudes and securely possessing the high ground of more or less conventional morality".[102] In an essay, Huxley retails the same anecdote and goes on to argue that what is truly modern is not sexual promiscuity, which was practised by the "Romans under Caracalla, the Asiatic Greeks, [and] the Babylonians", but "monogamous love and chastity".[103] While the brunt of Huxley's contempt seems reserved for the ignorance of the man for thinking that he and his wife were in the vanguard of a revolutionary new way of living, one also senses his distaste for the "modern" modus vivendi, which includes sexual promiscuity.

In "Personality and the Discontinuity of the Mind", Huxley laments that the ideal of social efficiency has supplanted religion as a purposive framework within which to unify man's discontinuous psychological states. Consequently, sex and emotion have been suppressed, since they impede efficiency, while reason

100 Lauryssens includes many of Maria's letters in his book. In one of them, written in the early 1950s, she tells her sister Jeanne that Huxley has become celibate: "I no longer drive him to the string of beautiful women he used to sleep with". Huxley's newfound celibacy, though, doubtless derived from the fact that Maria was now dying of cancer and thus it would have been insensitive to expect her to continue to arrange these liaisons. Lauryssens maintains that in the 1940s Maria joined the *ménage à trois* of Greta Garbo, Mercedes de Acosta and Marlene Dietrich. In another interesting letter, it transpires that Maria had a sexual relationship with Sybille Bedford, who was attached to the Huxley household in Sanary and lived with them in Albany House, Piccadilly, in the mid-1930s: "I recall your delicious softness", she writes to Bedford in January 1945, "your gentle warmth, the flowing curves of your body", etc. See Lauryssens, *My Brave New World*, chap. 3. For Maria's part in the Sewing Circles, see Dunaway, *Huxley in Hollywood*, 89, 201.

101 Murray, *Aldous Huxley*, 189.

102 Ibid., 189–190.

103 Aldous Huxley, "What, Exactly, is Modern?", in *CE* 1: 171.

has been valorised. But if Huxley deplores this new breed of Stoicism, he also objects to the mindless reaction to it, in which sex and emotion are indulged in indiscriminately purely because they have been regarded as illicit hitherto.[104] In the same essay, Huxley attacks Anatole France, who regarded "sex as a simple physiological function and love-making as scarcely more than a medicinable act of purging", and defends the asceticism France lambastes, arguing that the energy that accrues from chastity, while often "malevolent and self-destructive", can also be "transmuted into intellectual, imaginative, and devotional energy".[105]

And yet, as has been shown above, Huxley is more often critical of asceticism and praises those writers, such as Chaucer and Rabelais, who celebrate dung and flesh and earthy appetite. Indeed, there is a pronounced tension in his work between sex and asceticism. For example, in the poem "From the Pillar", Huxley writes about Symeon the Stylite, a fifth-century Christian ascetic saint who achieved fame because he lived for 37 years on a small platform atop a pillar near Aleppo in Syria:

> Simeon, the withered stylite,
> Sat gloomily looking down
> Upon each roof and skylight
> In all the seething town.
>
> And in every upper chamber,
> On roofs, where the orange flowers
> Make weary men remember
> The perfume of long-dead hours,
>
> He saw the wine-drenched riot
> Of harlots and human beasts,
> And how celestial quiet
> Was shattered by their feasts.
>
> The steam of fetid vices
> From a thousand lupanars,
> Like smoke of sacrifices,
> Reeked up to the heedless stars.
>
> And the saint from his high fastness
> Of purity apart

104 See Huxley, "Personality", in *CE* 2: 273.
105 Ibid., 267.

Cursed them and their unchasteness,
And envied them in his heart.[106]

Huxley is as fascinated by the asceticism of the saint as he is by the human depravity his speaker describes with such gusto, "the wine-drenched riot / Of harlots and human beasts"; it is typical of his work that he feels the need to debunk the saint's "purity" by highlighting his simultaneous hatred and envy of lascivious humanity.

But if Huxley enjoyed the care-free open marriage Bedford describes, in which Maria arranged for her husband to sleep with the most desirable women of their racy social set, why did Huxley portray sex with such unrelieved pessimism? Huxley's affair with Nancy Cunard partly explains the recurring portraits in his fiction of the soulless society vamp, for whom sex is wholly divorced from feeling, and who expresses no compunction for the broken hearts she leaves behind. There is no surviving correspondence between them, since Huxley's letters to Cunard (if she deigned to keep them) would have been destroyed when her house in Normandy was pillaged by the Nazis during World War II, while her letters to him were doubtless lost in the fire that ravaged Huxley's Los Angeles home in 1961. They first met in 1917. Like Huxley, Cunard had contributed poems to the Sitwells' anthology *Wheels*, and frequented the bohemian Eiffel Tower restaurant and the Café Royal in London. According to Bedford, Huxley's infatuation with Cunard began in the autumn of 1922, though Cunard's biographer Lois Gordon mentions that in the summer of that year Cunard "went to Eddington, England, with Iris [Tree], Diana Cooper, Prince Faid and Aldous Huxley", so it may have begun then.[107] In May or June of the following year Maria gave Huxley an ultimatum: either accompany her to Italy or live without her in London.[108] At around this time, Cunard was involved with several other men, including the painter Alvero "Chile" Guevara, Wyndham Lewis and Michael Arlen. Like Myra Viveash in *Antic Hay*, Cunard had been desolated by the death of her lover Peter Broughton Adderley in World War I, which had left her chronically lonely and incapable of love.

Cunard was attracted to strong, brutish men and was thus indifferent to the timidity and sensitivity of Huxley, though she evidently found him an

106 Aldous Huxley, "From the Pillar", in *Collected Poetry*, 101.

107 Lois Gordon, *Nancy Cunard: Heiress, Muse, Political Idealist* (New York: Columbia Press, 2007), 115. While none of Huxley's letters from the period come from Eddington, it is possible he was there before he left for Salzburg and Forte dei Marmi in August.

108 See Bedford, *Aldous Huxley*, 138.

entertaining companion and encouraged him to the extent that he doggedly followed her to parties and night-clubs, despite his aversion to drunken crowds. Theodore Gumbril's recollected pursuit of Myra Viveash was based, Bedford claims, on Huxley's experience with Cunard. Eventually, Cunard submitted to Huxley's advances out of pity.[109] She cruelly likened the experience to "being crawled over by slugs", and dropped Huxley a few days later.[110] For his part, Huxley was still bewitched by Cunard, in spite of the hatred he felt for her.[111] The scene in *Those Barren Leaves* where Chelifer spends the night waiting for Barbara outside her flat was inspired by Huxley's experience of waiting for Cunard; and the "swarthy Syrian" Barbara finally appears with may be modelled on the Armenian novelist Michael Arlen (who based the heroine of his best-selling novel *The Green Hat* on Cunard).[112]

Huxley's experience with Cunard was deeply humiliating and may in part account for the pronounced darkening of his vision in *Antic Hay*. For instance, whereas Anne merely drives Gombauld to distraction while he is painting her portrait in *Crome Yellow*, Mrs Viveash, while sitting for Lypiatt, induces a kind of Wagnerian despair; and Denis' romantic disillusionment, while it might appear to him to be the end of the world, is altogether innocent in comparison with Gumbril's cynical excursions as the Complete Man and his corruption of Shearwater's wife. It is noteworthy that Mrs Viveash, for all her feckless irresponsibility, is ultimately a sympathetic figure, goaded by grief for her dead lover into an endless succession of affairs that leave her feeling empty, whereas she could easily have been a two-dimensional monster on whom Huxley vented his spleen. But Myra was only the first of Huxley's dissolute vamps, and the theme of sexual obsession became a feature of his work.[113]

Another affair from this period that has recently come to light is that with Mary Hutchinson. Murray, perhaps wanting to bolster his portrait of the artist as a covert Lothario, exaggerates the intensity and duration of the affair:

> From the end of 1922, letters to Mary flowed steadily, and the two were involved for the rest of the decade at least, as was, gradually, Maria, a *ménage à trois* as it became, that seems to embody the popular idea of Bloomsbury sexual freedom.[114]

109 See ibid., 136–137.

110 See Anne Chisholm, *Nancy Cunard* (London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1979), 75.

111 See Bedford, *Aldous Huxley*, 136.

112 See Chisholm, *Nancy Cunard*, 78.

113 See Chelifer and Barbara in *Those Barren Leaves*; Walter and Lucy in *Point Counter Point*; Sebastian Barnack and Veronica Thwale in *Time Must Have a Stop*.

114 Murray, *Aldous Huxley*, 143.

At the beginning of their correspondence, Huxley was under the spell of Nancy Cunard while Mary was married to St John Hutchinson and engaged in an affair with Clive Bell, and seems to have offered Huxley little more than sympathy.[115] Moreover, Hutchinson was more interested in Maria: "Of the two Huxleys", she writes, "Maria was the one I loved. Aldous was gentle, aloof, affectionate and even ardent sometimes, but it was Maria who attracted and charmed me".[116]

After finishing *Antic Hay* in Forte dei Marmi, Huxley returned to London at the end of July and met with Hutchinson. But as Sexton affirms there is nothing at this stage to suggest sexual intimacy.[117] Much of their early correspondence consists of Huxley proposing lunches, concerts and plays, and Hutchinson declining (her letters to Huxley were presumably burnt in the fire), and Huxley lamenting that he has to go abroad. After his brief visit to London, he moved to Castel a Montici in Florence.[118] They next met in September 1924; Huxley writes to apologise for being depressing and regrets that she is still holding him at arm's length.[119] His next visit to London occurred in July 1925, when it seems he and Hutchinson became lovers: "Some of your scent", he writes, "still clings about me; and when I move I suddenly catch little whiffs of it – and there's an end for the moment of any pursuit of the *mot juste*".[120] Maria was in Belgium at this time visiting relatives, but an assignation was made for the three of them the following month at a hotel in Paris. Maria may well have become physically intimate with Hutchinson at this point, but there is nothing to suggest Huxley was involved; in a letter written a month later, Huxley's recollections of Paris are wholly concerned with Hutchinson.[121]

There then followed another long hiatus while Huxley and Maria travelled through India, south-east Asia and the United States. Huxley next saw Hutchinson in June 1926. While Maria was in Belgium with her family, Huxley seems to have shuttled between his aunt's house in Hampstead, his club (the Athenaeum) and a studio in Onslow Mews in South Kensington. They continued to see

115 See for instance his letter from January 1923, in which he signs off "I kiss your hands because I am not allowed to kiss your mouth", in Sexton, *Selected Letters*, 115.

116 Quoted in Murray, *Aldous Huxley*, 143. Murray notes that he confirmed "Mary's interest in Aldous as a means to Maria" with Sybille Bedford.

117 See James Sexton, "Aldous Huxley's Letters to Mary Hutchinson: A Partial Preview to a Coming Collection", in *The Perennial Satirist: Essays in Honour of Bernfried Nugel*, ed. Peter Firchow and Hermann J. Real (Münster: LIT Verlag, 2005), 319.

118 See Murray, *Aldous Huxley*, 154.

119 See Sexton, *Selected Letters*, 124.

120 Ibid., 125.

121 See ibid., 141.

each other until the end of July, when, with Huxley on the point of returning to Italy (via Belgium), Hutchinson decided to end the affair.[122] However, she seems to have given Huxley some hope of a renewal of their intimacy in the future, for his letters from Cortina have a flirtatious character and repeatedly allude to the Onslow idyll.[123] But despite Huxley's repeated exhortations to Hutchinson to come and stay with them in Cortina, she never made the trip. Meanwhile, her affair with Clive Bell was coming to an end and they finally parted in January 1927 when she informed him she was in love with someone else (the American artist Peter Morris).[124] Although Huxley was once again staying in Onslow Mews in the spring of 1927, there seems to have been no repetition of the dalliance of the previous year, despite the fact that, according to Murray, "Mary was a frequent visitor";[125] at any rate, in Huxley's letters to Hutchinson there are no wistful recollections of their intimacies, and the tone of his correspondence gradually becomes less amorous, more friendly, concerned with books, people and ideas. Huxley's affair with Hutchinson, then, while it played itself out over a period of years, was actually brief when the time they spent together is added up – July and August 1925; June and July 1926 – and, *pace* Murray, there was no *ménage à trois*.

And whatever joys he derived from his affair with Hutchinson, Huxley's attitude to sex in *Point Counter Point* remained predominantly hostile. In addition to Walter's unmanning affair with Lucy and Spandrell's God-baiting debauchery, John Bidlake, after a lifetime of philandering, is stricken with cancer; Sidney Quarles' affair with his secretary Gladys ends in ignominy; Elinor is driven by her husband's indifference into an affair with the fascist Everard Webley, and blames herself for the death of her son; Philip's pursuit of Molly d'Exergillod, who affirms the spiritual benefits of platonic relationships, ends in a humiliating rebuff; and Lucy is driven by sheer ennui into an endless succession of unfulfilling affairs. Only Mark Rampion is afforded a satisfactory relationship but he fails to embody the philosophy he so volubly articulates.

Joseph Bentley argues that, under the influence of Lawrence, Huxley attempted to embrace the body, but that he could only pay lip service to his friend's philosophy and continued to vilify the flesh in his fiction.[126] Meckier

122 See Huxley's melancholy letter of July 21, 1926, in ibid., 177–178.

123 See for instance his letter of Nov. 14, 1926: "How incredibly quickly we had no clothes on! It was almost miraculous", in ibid., 184.

124 See David Bradshaw, "Those Extraordinary Parakeets: Clive Bell and Mary Hutchinson. Part Two", *The Charleston Magazine* 17 (Spring/Summer 1998): 8.

125 Murray, *Aldous Huxley*, 199.

126 See Joseph Bentley, "Huxley's Ambivalent Responses to the Ideas of D.H. Lawrence", *Twentieth Century Literature* 13, no. 3 (1967): 141–142.

argues that when Huxley maintains, in *Do What You Will*, that Swift was drawn to depict the sordidness and perversity of the body for the joy of overcoming his revulsion, "it is difficult not to hear Quarles-Huxley exorcising himself".[127] On the one hand, then, Huxley desired to achieve a Rabelaisian acceptance of the body, to celebrate sensuality like Chaucer, to affirm, like Lawrence, the uncivilised impulses of the unconscious, the blind unreason of the blood; on the other hand, he was fascinated by the ugly and grotesque, his fiction recorded romantic disillusionment and the misery of sexual obsession and entertained asceticism as a solution to the intractable problem of desire; and, in his private life, while he tried to live a life of the body he was constitutionally condemned to live a life of the mind, and wound up having sex in the head, for example his largely epistolary affair with Mary Hutchinson.

Huxley's ambivalent attitude to sex is also evident in his next novel, *Brave New World* (1932). One of the more alarming innovations of the World State is its encouragement of erotic play in children. The idea derives from Bronislaw Malinowski's book *The Sexual Life of Savages*, which Huxley read with considerable enthusiasm in 1929, recommending it to several friends. He even alludes to it in the novel: while discoursing on the horrors of family life, Mustapha Mond reflects: "And yet, among the savages of Samoa, in certain islands off the coast of New Guinea…", which then leads to the following passage in indirect speech:

> The tropical sunshine lay like warm honey on the naked bodies of children tumbling promiscuously among the hibiscus blossoms. Home was in any one of twenty palm-thatched houses. In the Trobriands conception was the work of ancestral ghosts; nobody had ever heard of a father.[128]

This is a slight distortion of the customs that obtain in the Trobriand Islands, or at any rate those observed by Malinowski. Children live with their mother and her husband (the concept of paternity does not exist since the Trobrianders believe in reincarnation and think that women may become pregnant without a man as long as they are not virgins and the "tightness" has been removed, enabling the spirit baby to be inserted). From the age of about five, however, the children are relatively autonomous and spend most of their time with other

127 Meckier, *Satire and Structure*, 39.

128 Huxley, *Brave New World*, 33. Although the source of the above is ambiguous, only Mustapha Mond could possibly know anything about the customs of the Trobriand islanders.

children, and engage in erotic play and, as they get older, intercourse.[129] The chief difference between the Trobrianders and the citizens of the World State, is that the former eventually get married and are expected to be faithful.

"These Melanesians," Huxley writes to Mary Hutchinson,

> are so infinitely more rational and civilized, in the majority of their sexual customs than we are. [...] It's the early start, I'm sure, that's important and the lack of which spoils European life and produces the nervous breakdowns etc. But it appears to be impossible, as the Indians have discovered, to combine childish sexuality with intensive intellectual education. Malinowski's savages are Neolithic men and so not seriously bothered by educational problems. They can afford to spend their childhood and adolescence in idyllic flirtations under the hibiscus bushes. We can't. But, *per contra,* can we afford to spend our childhood and adolescence learning to be, not merely intellectually efficient, but also unhappy, nervously unstable, perverted, mad?[130]

Another attractive feature of Trobriand society that Huxley appropriated for *Brave New World* was the absence of the Oedipus complex. On the one hand, John is presented as a case study of the deleterious results of adolescent sexual repression and his problems with Lenina largely arise as a result of his relationship with Linda, of whom he is jealous, and, goaded into Oedipal fury by reading *Hamlet*, he comically attempts to kill her lover Popé; on the other hand, what the Brave New Worlders gain in mental health from being bred in bottles and raised by the state is cancelled out by what they lose in terms of humanity.

The enticingly "pneumatic" Beta females of *Brave New World*, such as Lenina and Fanny, seem to have been inspired by the emancipated women Huxley saw in America.[131] And in *Jesting Pilate* (1926), he notes the presence in Los Angeles of "thousands of flappers", who "give, as T.S. Eliot has phrased it, a 'promise of pneumatic bliss'", but "not much else, to judge by their faces", which are "curiously uniform, unindividual and blank".[132] These are the young American women Huxley upbraids in "Fashions in Love" for regarding sex as

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129 See Bronislaw Malinowski, *The Sexual Life of Savages in North-Western Melanesia: An Ethnographic Account of Courtship, Marriage and Family Life Among the Natives of the Trobriand Islands, British New Guinea* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1957), 15, 46–47, 156.

130 Sexton, *Selected Letters*, 219.

131 See for instance his letter to Mary Hutchinson dated May 1926, in which he notes the crowds of "exquisitely pretty flappers" with their immodestly tight swimming suits that leave nothing to the imagination in ibid., 172.

132 Huxley, "America", in *CE* 2: 551.

a recreational activity of no more significance than "dancing or tennis". This seems to be Huxley's attitude in *Brave New World*, for while John's extravagant passion for Lenina is often comical, it is ultimately preferable to the affectless sexual promiscuity of the World State.

Brave New World is the first of Huxley's novels to features orgies and self-flagellation. In the book, both these activities mingle religion with sex. In the appendix to *The Devils of Loudun* (1952), Huxley writes that man has always felt the urge to transcend his personality, and that in the absence of "upward self-transcendence" through religion, he has readily embraced the path of "downward self-transcendence" through music, dance, sex and drugs.[133] Given that the Brave New Worlders worship Henry Ford, they must make do with Community Sings, casual sex and *soma*. The orgiastic Solidarity Services thus serve as substitutes for religion and are administered in the same instrumental manner as a Violent Passion Surrogate. Huxley is not lampooning the Eucharist when he depicts Bernard's group passing "the loving cup of strawberry ice-cream soma", rather he is mocking the poverty of the ceremony the state has contrived to take its place.[134] Likewise, self-flagellation, Huxley notes in *Heaven and Hell* (1956), was an orthodox form of penance in the medieval and Early Modern eras, and helped to induce "visionary and mystical experience" in its practitioners.[135] At the lighthouse, John embarks on a course of physical austerities in order to purify himself of "the filth of civilized life", to move closer to God and to atone for his misplaced passion for the "strumpet" Lenina.[136] The comedy of the self-flagellation scenes arises from the combination of John's earnest desire for expiation, the mounting excitement he feels as he imagines it is Lenina's comely flesh he is chastising and the Oedipal thoughts of his mother that inescapably intrude.

But for all the fun Huxley has at John's expense, it is worth noting that, like Trevenen, he is driven to commit suicide by his inability to live up to his ideals. His notions of religion and love – derived, on the one hand, from reading Shakespeare, and on the other from the Penitentes Christianity and Native American animism of Malpais – are severely tested by the soulless hedonism of the World State. He is appalled by the mandatory promiscuity that has outlawed fidelity and love. He regards Lenina in troubadourish terms as an exalted spiritual being to whom he aspires to prove his worthiness by undertaking some feat of courtly derring-do, and is mortified by the lustful thoughts her

133 Huxley, *Devils*, 362–363.
134 Huxley, *Brave New World*, 70.
135 Huxley, *Heaven and Hell*, in CE 6: 35–36.
136 Huxley, *Brave New World*, 218.

body inspires. Thus when Lenina departs from his lofty expectations of love by undressing in front of him, he is filled with dismay and ends up reviling her. Despite his resolve to forget her, he is hounded by memories of her naked body at the lighthouse in Surrey and when Lenina shows up in person a week later, accompanied by a pack of prurient sightseers from the World State, John finally succumbs to his base instincts and participates in a *soma*-fuelled orgy. Unable to tolerate such an egregious violation of his ideals, he hangs himself the next day.

The Ascetic Phase: *Eyeless in Gaza* to *Time Must Have a Stop*

Huxley's next novel, *Eyeless in Gaza*, inaugurated a new phase in his career. Although, as previously noted, there was a tension between sex and asceticism in Huxley's work in the 1920s, the downfall of Walter Bidlake and Francis Chelifer were wholly secular affairs; henceforth, the sexual and the spiritual would be ineluctably linked, and Huxley was at pains to depict the way in which the libido of his characters both impeded their spiritual progress and impaired their morality.

In *Eyeless in Gaza*, Huxley pointedly abandons his advocacy of Lawrentian life-worship and, with it, his largely unsuccessful attempt to adopt an affirmative attitude to the body. Anthony Beavis tendentiously maintains that both Blake and Lawrence hold that man is no more than the locus of a succession of states.[137] This philosophy both absolves him of responsibility for his past actions, and makes of commitment (either to a person or a cause) an absurdity. Thus he feels no compunction in spurning Helen's love while cynically using her for sex and accepts an invitation to Mary Amberley's party on the grounds that the man of 1926 has no connection with the man of 1914, who seduced Joan at the behest of his mistress Mary, which resulted in Brian's suicide. It is no coincidence that the train of events that leads to his mystical turn is catalysed by the dog that falls from an aeroplane while he is lying in a post-coital stupor with Helen on the roof of his villa. This fall is fraught with religious significance, and is symbolic of the Christian Fall:[138] Helen later describes the roof as the "Garden of Eden",[139] into which the dog violently intrudes, making

137 See Huxley, *Eyeless*, 100–101.

138 See Jerry Wasserman, "Huxley's Either/Or: The Case for *Eyeless in Gaza*", in *Critical Essays on Aldous Huxley*, ed. Jerome Meckier (New York: G.K. Hall, 1996), 135, for the significance of the Fall and the three symbolic "falls" in the novel – of the dog, of Brian Foxe when he commits suicide, and Mark Staithes' fall from his mule in Mexico.

139 Huxley, *Eyeless*, 204.

them self-conscious of their nakedness and drenching them in blood (Huxley may be invoking the blood of Christ *qua* sacrificial lamb); as the plane is passing overhead, Anthony comments that the pilot will have a "God's-eye view of us here" and likens himself and Helen to the Old Testament adulterers David and Bathsheba.[140] In the aftermath of this episode, Anthony perceives Helen as a "person", an "embodied spirit", rather than a sexual object, and falls in love with her; but Helen does not give him the chance to express his feelings and terminates the affair in disgust.[141]

Elsewhere in the novel, sex is portrayed with unremitting pessimism: Mary Amberley is financially ruined by her sexual servitude to Gerry Watchett; the latter takes advantage of her daughter Helen's grief over the death of her kitten to seduce her; as a result, Helen becomes pregnant and is forced to go to France for an abortion; Anthony's homosexual uncle, James Beavis, becomes a Catholic by sublimating his libido; and the middle-aged Beppo is rendered miserable by his increasingly unsuccessful pursuit of young men: "B's hell", Anthony writes in his diary after spotting Beppo cottaging, "an underground lavatory with rows of urinals stretching to infinity in all directions and a boy at each. Beppo walking up and down the rows, for ever – his sweating self, but worse".[142]

It is Dr James Miller who sets Anthony on the spiritual path. Miller (although previously married) is but the first of several celibate guru figures in Huxley's fiction. Admittedly, Miller recommends marriage rather than celibacy for Anthony, but it is as a result of his influence that Anthony renounces his old life of sensual indulgence. Miller also advises Anthony to become a vegetarian, both for the sake of his health and in order to speed his spiritual progress. Miller was partly inspired by Gerald Heard, who, as noted in the last chapter, became celibate in the mid-1930s as a result of his spiritual devotions, particularly his interest in *kundalini yoga*[143]. All the manifold varieties of yoga subscribe to Pātañjali's eight-limbed path; chastity or *brahmacharya* is one of the five *yamas* (ethical restraints).[144] In the mid-1930s, Huxley had begun to practise meditation but it seems that at this stage he was not ready for sexual continence or vegetarianism.[145]

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140 Ibid., 104.

141 Ibid., 105.

142 Ibid., 156. The latter is an allusion to Gerald Manley Hopkins' poem "I Wake and Feel the Fell of Dark, Not Day", which Huxley often quotes as an example of the spiritual impediment of self.

143 See Falby, *Pigeonholes*, 84.

144 The ethical imperative to be vegetarian falls under the *yama* of non-violence (*ahimsa*).

145 See his letter to Robert Nichols in Smith, *Letters*, 389, in which he complains that meditation "probably demands a pretty careful regulation of diet and sexual habits".

In his next book, *Ends and Means* (1937), Huxley propounded the ethic of non-attachment. This concept is treated at length in the *Bhagavad Gita*; in a much later letter to Malcolm Cowley (November 1959), Huxley expresses his dismay over the *Gita's* "disturbing justification of war for those who can break the *ahimsa* commandment in a spirit of detachment".[146] "How odd", he adds parenthetically,

> that there should be everywhere a God of Battles and almost nowhere a God of Brothels, – that almost everyone has said that killing can be done in a holy way and is not incompatible with enlightenment, whereas only a very few Tantriks and Christian heretics [...] have ever maintained that enlightenment was compatible with love-making, or that love-making could be a yoga or spiritual exercise![147]

In *Ends and Means*, Huxley takes Krishna's precept of non-attachment and applies it to sex. Intercourse that is performed in an attached manner, "when it takes the form of a physical addiction" is "evil", whereas if it is performed in a non-attached manner (in the context of a loving relationship unsullied by jealousy or possessiveness) it is "good".[148] Sex "is also evil", he argues, "when it manifests itself as a way of satisfying the lust for power or the climber's craving for position and social distinction".[149] On the one hand, chastity is a "major virtue", in that without it "societies lack energy and individuals are condemned to perpetual unawareness, attachment and animality";[150] on the other, it is "not necessarily correlated with charity", since the energy that obtains from sexual continence "is malevolent at least as often as it is well-intentioned".[151]

The even-handed attitude to sex evident in *Ends and Means* is wholly absent from *After Many a Summer* (1939). For Mr Propter, good only exists on the animal level, "as the proper functioning of the organism in accordance with the laws of its own being", and on the spiritual level, in which one is liberated from the shackles of time, desire and aversion, and above all the self.[152] On the animal level, Mr Propter explains to Pete, sex is part of the instinctive physiological intelligence of the body; whereas on the human level, this "physiological intelligence" only controls the "cellular activities which ma[k]e sexual

146 Sexton, *Selected Letters*, 470.
147 Ibid.
148 Huxley, "Ethics", in *CE* 4: 391.
149 Ibid., 393.
150 Ibid., 396.
151 Ibid., 397.
152 Huxley, *Summer*, 119.

behaviour possible".[153] All the rest is "non-instinctive" and takes place on the "strictly human level of self-consciousness".[154] In other words, while men and women might imagine that they are "most exclusively animal in their sexuality", they are in fact indulging in a wholly human form of intercourse, namely sex in the head.[155] Consequently, the characters of *After Many a Summer* are heir to a host of sexual perversions. For example, the 60-year-old Jo Stoyte is enthralled by Virginia Maunciple, who exhibits a mawkish devotion to the Virgin Mary while behaving like an unregenerate Mary Magdalen. Although 22 years old, she looks much younger and has an "air of being hardly adolescent, of not having reached the age of consent".[156] For Stoyte, Virginia's combination of "the appearance of innocence and the fact of experience" inspires in him feelings of the "purest father-love and the most violent eroticism".[157] Jeremy Pordage, Robert Baker notes, reserves "his emotional energy for his mother and his sexual energy for either prostitutes or pornography".[158] Dr Obispo is likewise drawn to the Marquis de Sade, and, like Spandrell, takes pleasure in the wilful corruption of young women (in this case Virginia). The Fifth Earl of Gonister, whose edition of *Les Cent-Vingt Jours de Sodome* Pordage and Obispo squabble over, is a sadist, both in the sense that he derives sexual pleasure from the infliction of pain and in the sense that he revels in the exercise of power afforded by his rank and wealth.[159] Even Pete Boone's love for Virginia is a romantic species of sex in the head, in that he loves, not the bisexual mistress of Jo Stoyte and Sigmund Obispo, but an idealised "angel" born of his imagination.

With the notable exception of the ascetic Mr Propter, the characters of *After Many a Summer* are trapped on the human level of time and personality, craving and aversion, and are therefore condemned to suffer and participate in the multifarious forms of human evil. So for instance while Pete imagined he was doing good in Spain by fighting for the ideals of democracy and freedom, he was, according to Propter, engaged in a form of narcissism, since ideals (notwithstanding the ideal of enlightenment) are but projections of the ego. Consequently, Pete's putative self-sacrifice was in reality an intensification of

153 Ibid., 228.
154 Ibid.
155 Ibid., 229.
156 Ibid., 45.
157 Ibid., 44.
158 Robert S. Baker, *The Dark Historic Page: Social Satire and Historicism in the Novels of Aldous Huxley 1921–1939* (Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1982), 221.
159 For the latter definition of sadism, see Robert S. Baker, "The Nightmare of the Frankfurt School: The Marquis de Sade and the Problem of Modernity in Aldous Huxley's Dystopian Narrative", in *Now More Than Ever*, 256.

the self, which is evil, given that the goal of human life is unitive knowledge of God through transcendence of the ego. In the wake of Virginia's transports of "erotic epilepsy" with Dr Obispo, she keenly feels the "ugliness and inadequacy" of her self, which makes her all the more anxious, despite the guilt she feels over betraying her Uncle Jo and the mortification that prevents her from opening the curtains to the Virgin Mary's shrine, to demean herself with Obispo again.[160] Stoyte's attachment to his "child-mistress" makes him miserable, and he winds up mistakenly killing Pete in a jealous rage, then has to bribe Obispo to cover it up. As a result of his revitalised libido, the Fifth Earl of Gonister almost kills a girl in his mid-90s and has to fake his own death in order to evade punishment, thereafter living in the subterranean cellars of Selford with his housekeeper, on whom he continues to exercise his sadistic appetites even after he has become an ape.

In *After Many a Summer*, Huxley has no patience with human frailty and his moral is extraordinarily austere: either remain on the human level, and suffer the slings and arrows of attachment, aversion and time, idolatrously worshipping the ego-projections of nationalism that lead inexorably to war, or attempt to overcome "the almost insuperable difficulties" that prevent all but a tiny fraction of humanity from achieving a direct experiential awareness of the godhead.[161] In a letter to Sir Richard Rees, George Orwell complains that "the more holy [Huxley] gets, the more his books stink with sex".[162] The mingling of the sacred and the sexual that was occasionally evident in Huxley's previous work, is writ large in *After Many a Summer.* For instance, Peter Bowering notes the juxtaposition of "the replica of the Grotto of Lourdes and the bronze nymph of Giambologna spouting streams of water from her polished breasts" at the foot of Stoyte's castle.[163] In Virginia's bedroom there is a shrine to the Virgin Mary as well as Watteau's picture *Embarkation for Cythera*, an example of the *fête galante* genre, in which the French aristocracy were depicted amorously disporting in a pastoral setting (in this case the island of Venus). Virginia herself, Baker notes, is both "Madonna and Magdalen"; Pordage is delighted by discovering a copy of Sade in the covers of *The Book of Common Prayer*; in the Beverly Pantheon, "Charlie Habakkuk plans […] a display of Christian virgins in various states of nudity and sadomasochistic bondage".[164] At opposite

160 Huxley, *Summer*, 198.
161 Ibid., 286.
162 Quoted in Watt, *The Critical Heritage*, 334.
163 Peter Bowering, *Aldous Huxley: a Study of the Major Novels* (London: The Athlone Press, 1968), 144.
164 Baker, *Dark Historic Page*, 218–219.

ends of the great hall of Stoyte's castle, hang El Greco's "Crucifixion of St Peter" and Rubens' picture of Hélène Fourment. The latter wears an expression of candid concupiscence and is naked save for a fur wrap, her flesh cascading in folds from beneath her arms and breasts (Baker notes the similarity between Hélène Fourment, who was sixteen when she married the 53-year-old Rubens, and Virginia Maunciple).[165]

If Huxley were merely, as Bowering maintains, creating a motif to symbolise the contradictory impulses of the spirit and the flesh, he is over-egging the pudding.[166] In "Personality and the Discontinuity of the Mind", Huxley notes how, for Jung, the unconscious acts as a balance to the concerns of the conscious mind and thus it follows "that the consciously convinced puritan is deeply preoccupied in his unconscious mind with precisely those sexual matters which he professes to hate".[167] *After Many a Summer*, given its insistence on spiritual salvation by abjuring the flesh, can be described as puritanical in outlook and is correspondingly preoccupied with sex. Indeed, Baker points out the centrality of the Sadeian Obispo (whereas Coleman, who plays a similar character in *Antic Hay*, is a marginal figure), and the unprecedented profusion of pornography and sado-masochism.[168] Moreover, Huxley was similarly divided in his personal life between the hedonistic allure of Hollywood on the one hand, and his involvement with the Vedanta Society and Krishnamurti on the other.

In *Time Must Have a Stop*, Sebastian Barnack follows the same narrative trajectory as Anthony Beavis, from sensual indulgence to a form of mysticism via guilt and the intervention of a guru figure. His first sexual experiences, however, prove consternating. Sebastian recalls the loss of his virginity with a prostitute thus:

> That rubber corset and, when they were in his room, her body, as unresponsive as its carapace. The bored perfunctory kisses, and the breath that stank of beer and caries and onions. His own excitement, so frenzied as to be almost instantly self-stultifying; and then, irremediable, the hideously sober coldness that brought with it a disgust for what lay there beside him, a horror as though for a corpse – and the corpse laughed and offered him its derisive condolences.[169]

165 See ibid., 203.
166 See Bowering, *Aldous Huxley*, 144.
167 Huxley, "Personality", in *CE* 2: 265.
168 See Baker, "Frankfurt School", 252, 254.
169 Huxley, *Time*, 28.

Afterwards the prostitute, regarding Sebastian's house, decides to double her rate, forcing him to borrow money from the elderly housemaid Ellen on pain of exposure. Likewise, his night of "shamelessness" with Veronica Thwale is disillusioning:

> In his fancy, love had been a kind of gay, ethereal intoxication; but last night's reality was more like madness. Yes, sheer madness; a maniac struggling in the darkness with another maniac.
>
> "Twin cannibals in bedlam…" The phrase came to him as he was examining the red and livid mark of teeth on his arm. Twin cannibals, devouring their own identity and one another's; ravening up reason and decency; obliterating the most rudimentary conventions of civilization. And yet it was precisely there, in that frenzy of the cannibals, that the attraction had lain. Beyond the physical pleasure lay the yet more rapturous experience of being totally out of bounds, the ecstasy of an absolute alienation.[170]

Indeed, of all the women Sebastian subsequently sleeps with, Veronica continues to offer the purest experience of "alienation" from the self, and their intimacy persists even after they both marry other people. After his wife Rachel discovers he is being unfaithful with Veronica, she miscarries and dies of blood poisoning as a result. In spite of his guilty conscience, Sebastian continues to sleep with Veronica, even though this means deceiving his friend Paul De Vries (her husband), because she offers him "an experience of otherness almost as absolute […] as the otherness of God", and, thoroughly disgusted with himself, he is anxious to lose himself in downward self-transcendence.[171] In *The Devils of Loudun*, Huxley notes that there are two types of sexual self-transcendence, one which is "innocent", whose representative is D.H. Lawrence, and one which is "morally and aesthetically squalid", and is portrayed in the work of Jean Genet.[172] "But the second", Huxley writes, "and (one would sadly guess) the commoner variety takes those who indulge in it to a lower level of subhumanity, evokes the consciousness, and leaves the memory, of a completer alienation, than does the first".[173] Sebastian's debauchery with Veronica, then, is the obverse of the upward self-transcendence that leads to enlightenment, and results, not in the grace of God, but in the devil of addiction.

170 Ibid., 218.
171 Ibid., 272.
172 Huxley, *Devils*, 363.
173 Ibid.

It is in this state of guilt-ridden self-loathing that Sebastian once again encounters the mystic Bruno Rontini, whose imprisonment at the hands of the Italian fascists was partly Sebastian's fault. It is Bruno's radiant serenity and paradoxical vitality in the face of the throat cancer that is killing him that inspires Sebastian to forsake his former life of sensuality and embrace the mystical path, which results in his formulation of the "minimum working hypothesis". The latter is a version of the Perennial Philosophy: the goal of life is "unitive knowledge" of the "Godhead or Ground, which is the unmanifested principle of all manifestation".[174] The emphasis, as was the case with *After Many a Summer*, is on transcendence rather than immanence: with transcending time in favour of eternity, with transcending the phenomenal world (which for neo-Advaitins is *maya*) in favour of the noumenal Ground. In his next two novels, *Ape and Essence* (1948) and *The Genius and the Goddess* (1955), Huxley's newfound interest in Taoism can be discerned, and, as a consequence, he began to move away from the life-denying asceticism of neo-Advaita (which will be examined below).

William Tallis, who writes the eponymous film script in *Ape and Essence*, is another character whose amorous misadventures lead to a solitary life of aspirant mysticism. His revulsion from man's animalistic appetite is manifest in the sign he nails to the gate of his home in the Mojave Desert:

> The leech's kiss, the squid's embrace,
> The prurient ape's defiling touch:
> And do you like the human race?
> No, not much.[175]

Mrs Coulton tells the narrator that Tallis married a German woman before World War I, whom he divorced, leaving her and their daughter in Germany, while he returned to America and married an actress, who subsequently left him. His ex-wife and daughter died (Mrs Coulton says she thinks they were Jews, who presumably perished in the holocaust), and Tallis wrote the script to raise some money to send to his grand-daughter. From these facts, the narrator invents the following history for Tallis: his first wife was sexless and ethereal (a German Marjorie Carling), and he abandoned her for a sensuous American actress, who turned out to be a "bitch" à la Lucy Tantamount. For "the sake of

174 Huxley, *Time*, 282.
175 Huxley, *Ape*, 14.

physical pleasure" Tallis "had condemned a wife and a daughter to death at the hands of maniacs, and a granddaughter to the caress of any soldier or black marketeer with a pocketful of sweetmeats".[176]

At the start of the novel, Huxley once again mingles the sacred and the sexual by ironically likening the complicated love life of the screen-writer Bob Briggs with the plight of Gandhi, Christ and Martin Luther, and dreaming up mock-religious paintings on the subject. In his screenplay of Catherine of Siena, Briggs creates a factitious love interest for the saint, "but", he says, "it's all sublimated and spiritual, and after she's dead he goes into a hermitage and prays in front of her picture".[177]

Sex and religion are also intertwined in Tallis' scenario, which is set in Los Angeles in the year 2108. The population, inferring that the nuclear war that devastated the world over a century ago represented a victory of evil over good, worship Belial. One of the many ironies of the religion of Belial is that it is even more sexually repressive and contemptuous of women than Christianity. Women are regarded as "vessels of the Unholy Spirit", and are routinely whipped for their "Malicious Animal Magnetism", in other words the lustful thoughts they inspire.[178] Although Belial is responsible for the sexual impulse, women are nonetheless blamed for the deformed babies that result from the genetic mutations caused by radiation: infants with more than three pairs of nipples and seven digits on a hand or foot are sacrificially killed in the "Purification" ceremony and their mothers whipped with a "pizzle" (a bull's penis). Sexual intercourse is forbidden except for a period of two weeks a year, which leads to carnal abandon in the population and Huxley gleefully depicts the orgies that erupt on Belial Day. In order to avoid all temptation, the demonic clergy are castrated and attend to practical matters during the mating season while the laity are otherwise engaged.

There is a Taoist strain to Tallis' mysticism. In *The Perennial Philosophy*, Huxley defines the Tao as the "Nature of Things",[179] and in *Ape and Essence* there are several references to the "Order of Things", which is affirmed as the opposite of Belial. For instance, the Arch-Vicar maintains that history is the story of "Man pitting himself against Nature, the Ego against the Order of Things, Belial [...] against the Other One".[180] In a letter written at the beginning of 1948, Huxley explicitly refers to "Chinese Taoism, with its concept of an Order of Things".[181]

176 Ibid., 22.
177 Ibid., 8.
178 Ibid., 71.
179 Huxley, *Perennial Philosophy*, 115.
180 Huxley, *Ape*, 90.
181 Smith, *Letters*, 579.

In *Ape and Essence*, then, the "Order of Things" stands for the Tao, and Belial is a personification of man's God-eclipsing egotism. All Huxley's bugbears, the "lunatic dreams of Progress and Nationalism" and the World Wars to which they give rise, are attributed to the influence of Belial: "Not I", intones the Arch-Vicar, "but Belial in me".[182] The latter is an ironic inversion of the words of Saint Paul: "But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me" (1 Cor. 15: 10; KJV).[183]

Alfred Poole, after becoming separated from the other members of the "New Zealand Re-Discovery Expedition to North America", is captured by the Belial worshippers and narrowly escapes being buried alive by offering his botanical expertise to help improve their crops. He is a recognisable Huxley figure: a sexually repressed scientist (like Shearwater in *Antic Hay*), who has been emotionally crippled by an overbearing mother (like Jeremy Pordage and Brian Foxe), who denies the body (at 38, he is still a virgin) and lives in his head (like Philip Quarles). James Baker argues that Poole's aborted burial represents a rebirth for him: amid the sexual tumult of Belial Day, Poole embraces the body, falls in love with Loola, and is given an insight into his "glassy essence" by Shelley's *Epipsychidion* and *Adonais*, which affirm "the existence of a soul and a transcendent spiritual reality".[184] This is a significant reversal to *Point Counter Point*, in which Walter Bidlake, inspired by *Epipsychidion*, searches for divine immanence in his relationship with Marjorie Carling but ultimately experiences disillusionment and disgust; whereas Poole's reading of Shelley leads him to perceive the Tao in his love for Loola and even, at moments, in the ravaged landscape of Los Angeles: "There are times", says the narrator, after describing the distant mountains through Poole's eyes, "when the world seems purposefully beautiful, when it is as though some mind in things had suddenly chosen to make manifest, for all who choose to see, the supernatural reality that underlies all appearances".[185]

Poole is emboldened by reading Shelley to defy the Law of Belial and arranges clandestine trysts with Loola after the mating season is over. After

182 Huxley, *Ape*, 97.

183 See also Huxley, *Perennial Philosophy*, 116.

184 James R. Baker, "Golding and Huxley: The Fables of Demonic Possession", *Twentieth Century Literature* 46, no. 3 (2000): 324. The title of the novel and the reference above to "his glassy essence" derive from *Measure for Measure*: "but man, proud man, / Drest in a little brief authority, / Most ignorant of what he's most assured, / His glassy essence, like an angry ape, / Plays such fantastic tricks before high heaven / As make the angels weep" (2.2.120–125).

185 Huxley, *Ape*, 141.

quoting a passage from *Prometheus Unbound* in which the protagonist is described as a "spirit of keen joy", the narrator reflects:

> Joy is only for those whose life accords with the given Order of the world. For you there, the clever ones who think you can improve upon that Order, for you, the angry ones, the rebellious, the disobedient, joy is fast becoming a stranger. Those who are doomed to reap the consequences of your fantastic tricks will never so much as suspect its existence. Love, Joy and Peace – these are the fruits of the spirit that is your essence and the essence of the world. But the fruits of the ape-mind, the fruits of the monkey's presumption and revolt, are hate and unceasing restlessness and a chronic misery tempered only by frenzies more horrible than itself.[186]

When Loola worries that Belial will discover their love (the punishment for sexual activity outside the mating season is being buried alive), Poole reassures her that the "Order of Things", in other words the Tao, will always prevail over Belial (the God-eclipsing egotism of man), since "whenever evil is carried to the limit, it always destroys itself".[187] In the long term, the "Order of Things" always "comes to the surface again"; in the short term, individuals "can always work with the Order of Things".[188] In this spirit, Poole and Loola resolve to join the community of "Hots" (individuals who feel the stirrings of libido all year round, rather than during the mating season) in Fresno.

Huxley may have got the idea for his community of "Hots" from John Humphrey Noyes' Oneida Community. According to Noyes, Christ had returned to earth in the year 70 CE, thereby making it possible for human beings to be perfect, untainted by original sin. Noyes founded a utopian commune first in Vermont, then at Oneida in New York State, where he set about trying to achieve the "Kingdom of God" on earth. In order to promote social and spiritual cohesion, Noyes introduced the practices of "Male Continence" and "Complex Marriage".[189] The former was a prolonged period of sexual intercourse without ejaculation, which served the practical purpose of contraception and facilitated what Noyes termed "social magnetism" and mystical contemplation; the latter effectively proscribed monogamy: "At Oneida", Huxley writes, "there was

186 Ibid., 142.

187 Ibid., 148.

188 Ibid.

189 See Arthur Versluis, "Sexual Mysticisms in Nineteenth Century America: John Humphrey Noyes, Thomas Lake Harris, and Alice Bunker Stockham", in *Hidden Intercourse: Eros and Sexuality in the History of Western Esotericism*, ed. Wouter J. Hanegraaff and Jeffrey J. Kripal (Leiden: Brill, 2008): 334–335.

to be no love in a private corner, no idolatrous and God-eclipsing attachment of one for one, outside the general circulation. Each was married to all".[190] As with the Trobrianders, Huxley was tremendously intrigued by Noyes' example of a successful, socially and spiritually mandated form of sexual promiscuity.

He first read about Noyes when R.A. Parker sent him his book on the Oneida Community in 1937. Huxley immediately recommended it to A.E. Morgan (the chairman of the Tennessee Valley Authority), calling Noyes "an extraordinary man of genius".[191] To Parker, he writes that his book "interested me enormously and convinced me more than ever that there are very important practical lessons to be learned from the Oneida experiment".[192] While Noyes receives a passing mention in *Ends and Means* for his skill in excluding the "cranks" from his community and thereby ensuring its cohesion, it was not until 1956 that Huxley wrote about Noyes directly. In the essay "Ozymandias", Huxley praises Noyes for building a community in which the id "no longer raged and a reconciliation between sex, religion and society" was achieved, a feat which Huxley would portray in the fictional community of Pala.[193] His interest in the Oneida Community was doubtless revived by his investigation of Tantra, whose sexual ritual (*maithuna*), with its emphasis on right intention and mystical illumination, is in some respects similar to Male Continence.[194] In "Domesticating Sex", Huxley quotes from Sir John Woodroffe's book, *Shakti and Shakta*:

> Nothing in natural function is low or impure to the mind which recognizes it as Shakti and the working of Shakti. It is the ignorant and, in a true sense, vulgar mind which regards any natural function as low or coarse. [...] Once the reality of the world as grounded in the Absolute [i.e. Śiva] is established, the body seems to be less an obstacle to freedom; for it is a form of that self-same Absolute.[195]

In other words, the body is not sinful, it is sacred; and sex can be a sacrament.[196] Huxley's treatment of *maithuna* will be analysed below, but it is worth noting here that Woodroffe gives a sanitised account of Tantra, and repeatedly emphasises that only the highest *sādhaka* (worshipper), the *vīra* (hero), can consume the five forbidden *pañcatattva* (substances), namely *madya* (wine); *māṃsa*

190 Aldous Huxley, "Domesticating Sex", in *CE* 5: 452.
191 Sexton, *Selected Letters*, 343.
192 Ibid.
193 Aldous Huxley, "Ozymandias", in *CE* 5: 310.
194 See Huxley, "Domesticating Sex", in *CE* 5: 453.
195 Ibid.
196 A more detailed examination of Tantra will be undertaken below.

(meat); *matsya* (fish); *mudra* (parched grain); and *maithuna* in a sacramental manner; for lower castes, the five m's are treated as metaphors, and *maithuna* is the union of "Shakti Kundalini" with the "Supreme Shiva" in the *sahasrarā cakra* of the *sādhaka*.[197] For a *śūdra* to indulge in "mere animal copulation to ease desire" under the pretence of performing *maithuna* is a "sin", according to Woodroffe, and will redound in bad karma if not a season in hell.[198]

In *The Perennial Philosophy*, there is no mention of Tantra. The mysticism Huxley promotes there has much in common with neo-Advaita, which held that *brahman* both transcended, and was immanent in, the world. However, neo-Advaitins such as Prabhavananda tended to emphasise the transcendent aspect of the godhead. The original message of the Vedas, Heinrich Zimmer points out, was that the cosmos (and human beings) were divine, but as a result of the enduring influence of *pātañjali yoga*, which was rigidly dualistic, the unambiguous monism of the Vedic period "underwent a strangely contradictory change": the "new goal" was reunion with *brahman*, despite the fact that the cosmos and its inhabitants were an emanation of *brahman* and in that respect united with it.[199] Hence the transcendent unmanifest aspect of *brahman* came to be valorised over the immanent manifest aspect, in other words the cosmos, which was dismissed as *maya*. The puritanical attitude to sex evident in *After Many a Summer* and *Time Must Have a Stop* can be ascribed, then, to Huxley's neo-Advaitin interpretation of the Perennial Philosophy, which led him to turn his back on the body.[200] In the late 1940s and 50s, though, Huxley was increasingly influenced by the life-affirming traditions of Taoism, Mahayana and Zen Buddhism, which held that "Samsara and Nirvana, time and eternity, are one and the same", and which paved the way for his embrace of Tantra.[201]

Like *Ape and Essence*, *The Genius and the Goddess* is a transitional novel between the old, neo-Advaitin Perennial Philosopher and the new Tantric

197 John Woodroffe, *Shakti and Shakta: Essays and Addresses on the Shâkta Tantrashâstra*, third ed. (London: Luzac, 1929), 566–567. See also Hugh B. Urban, *Tantra: Sex, Secrecy, Politics, and Power in the Study of Religion* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 119.

198 See Woodroffe, *Shakti and Shakta*, 558, 562.

199 Heinrich Zimmer, *Philosophies of India* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1967), 595–596.

200 See Jeffrey J. Kripal, "An Island in Mind: Aldous Huxley and the Neurotheologian", in *Psychoanalysis, Culture, and Religions: Essays in Honour of Sudhir Kakar*, ed. Dinesh Sharma (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2014), 36.

201 Huxley, *Perennial Philosophy*, 62. Indeed, according to Kripal, Tantra is a "super tradition" in which Taoism, Mahayana and Zen Buddhism are subsumed. See Jeffrey J. Kripal, "Remembering Ourselves: On Some Countercultural Echoes of Contemporary Tantric Studies", in *Transformations and Transfer of Tantra*, 437.

Huxley, who celebrates sex as a sacrament. John Rivers is another archetypal Huxley hero, an ageing virgin with a suffocating mother, whose attitude to sex is conditioned by his Lutheran upbringing. After he falls in love with Katy Maartens, however, Rivers is able to perceive *nirvana* in *samsara*: "I remember how he looked at landscapes", says Rivers, referring to his 28-year-old self,

> and the colours were incomparably brighter, the patterns that things made in space unbelievably beautiful. I remember how he glanced around him in the streets, and St Louis, believe it or not, was the most splendid city ever built. People, houses, trees, T-model Fords, dogs at lamp-posts – everything was more significant. Significant, you may ask, of what? And the answer is: themselves. These were realities, not symbols.[202]

Huxley argued that most human beings perceive the world through the distorting lens of language; what accounts for the supernatural aspect of the natural world when in the throes of love or under the influence of psychedelics is that one perceives the object in itself, rather than, as Rivers puts it, as an "illustration of a verbal abstraction".[203] In the John Chandos interview, Huxley describes this phenomenon:

> I would say the natural is our tendency to project our notions and concepts on the outer world. To see the natural world never as the immediate datum of experience but as the illustration of some generalisation [...] an embodied label already existing in our skulls: this is what we call the natural world. The supernatural world as far as I'm concerned is the genuinely natural world, which is the world of immediate experience without all these concepts imposed on it. I mean anyone who has ever had the experience of seeing the world without any labels or concepts, immediately has the impression of its being supernatural. In a curiously paradoxical way nature as it is in itself, in as much as we can ever know it, is supernatural.[204]

The physicist Henry Maartens regards the world in terms of symbols, and, with his collection of Havelock Ellis, Krafft-Ebing and sundry works of pornography,

202 Aldous Huxley, *The Genius and the Goddess* (London: Triad Grafton, 1987), 34.

203 Ibid., 35.

204 From Sybille Bedford's transcript of the BBC John Chandos interview with Aldous Huxley recorded on July 7 and 11, 1961, in the Huxley archive of the Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center, University of Texas, Austin.

he is an egregious practitioner of sex in the head. His wife Katy, on the other hand, is one of the few Huxley characters who enjoys sex wholly in and with her body: "She had the instinctive wisdom", Rivers recalls,

> that taboos the four-letter words (and *a fortiori* the scientific polysyllables), while tacitly taking for granted the daily and nightly four-letter acts to which they refer. In silence, an act is an act is an act.[205]

At the far end of the spiritual "spectrum", says Rivers, lies "the Pure Light of the Void; and at the other end it's instinct, it's health, it's the perfect functioning of the organism so long as we don't interfere with it".[206] Katy exemplifies this animal grace; but the stress of her mother's death and Henry's illness threatens to snuff out her vitality. Although Rivers describes Katy as a pagan goddess, Huxley describes the concept of animal grace in terms of Taoism. In *The Perennial Philosophy*, he notes:

> Animal grace comes when we are living in full accord with our own nature on the biological level [...]. The reward of being thus in harmony with Tao or the Logos in its physical and physiological aspects is a sense of well-being, an awareness of life as good, not for any reason, but just because it is life.[207]

Katy has sex with Rivers in order to regain what Beulah (the Maartens' maid) calls her "virtue", and to save her dying husband:

> She had to become part once more of the natural, and therefore divine, *order of things*. She had to re-establish her contacts with life – with life at its simplest, life in its most unequivocal manifestations, as physical companionship, as the experience of animal warmth, as strong sensation, as hunger and the satisfaction of hunger. It was a matter of self-preservation.[208]

The virgin Rivers is simultaneously ecstatic, shocked by the carnal appetite of the woman he had idolised as a goddess (more Artemis than Aphrodite evidently), and wracked with guilt over their adultery. But while Rivers is stuck

205 Huxley, *Genius*, 78.
206 Ibid., 75.
207 Huxley, *Perennial Philosophy*, 166–167.
208 Huxley, *Genius*, 68–69. My italics.

in the world of Christian dualism, Katy is "beyond good and evil": from her "goddess-eye viewpoint nothing had happened that was not entirely natural", and she feels no compunction about cheating on Henry.[209] In the morning, her "virtue" is restored (Beulah even says that she had prayed for "Grace"), and as a result Henry begins to recover.[210] In retrospect, Rivers judges that both reactions – his own guilt and Katy's Olympian indifference – were wrong. Animal grace, Huxley asserts in *The Perennial Philosophy*, while it can be occasionally enjoyed by humans as a "holiday from self-consciousness", is for animals. "Man's nature is such that he must live a self-conscious life in time, not in a blissful sub-rational eternity on the hither side of good and evil".[211] Indeed, it is because we are self-conscious and consequently aware of a divine other, a Logos or Tao, that we must aspire to spiritual grace. But just as self-consciousness impedes animal grace, or the effective functioning of the organism, so it impedes the action of spiritual grace, which can only be experienced when we surrender our self-will.

Hence Katy's purely animal grace is portrayed as insufficient to a "situation with which only a thorough-going Christian or Buddhist could adequately deal",[212] for while she facilitates her husband's recuperation, she kindles her daughter's jealousy (the teenage Ruth is in love with Rivers), and Katy crashes the car while arguing with her over, it is implied, Ruth's accusations of adultery. In sum, then, while Huxley's depiction of sex in *The Genius and the Goddess* has lost the frenzied repugnance of *Time Must Have a Stop* ("Twin cannibals in bedlam"), and while Katy Maartens is a "goddess" rather than a heartless vamp and enjoys corporeal sex rather than sex in the head (in the manner of Lucy Tantamount), her sexual transgressions nonetheless lead to the death of herself and her daughter, whose dying bodies are likened by Rivers to "garbage – garbage with blood on it".[213]

The Tantric Phase: *Island*

It was not until Huxley took mescaline that he was able to perceive *nirvana* in *samsara* for himself, and his attitude to the body underwent a transformation. In *The Doors of Perception* (1954), he describes his first mescaline

209 Ibid., 69.
210 See ibid., 73.
211 Huxley, *Perennial Philosophy*, 167.
212 Huxley, *Genius*, 68.
213 Ibid., 93.

experiment in detail. At eleven a.m. on May 4, 1953, Huxley ingested 400 mg of mescaline under the supervision of the psychiatrist Dr Humphry Osmond. After an hour and half, the three flowers in a vase in his study that had struck him that morning as possessing a "lively dissonance" were transfigured: "I was not looking now at an unusual flower arrangement. I was seeing what Adam had seen on the morning of his creation – the miracle, moment by moment, of naked existence".[214] The rose, iris and carnation in his study did not signify the concept or signified "rose", "iris", "carnation", they signified "is-ness", a "transience that was yet eternal life, a perpetual perishing that was at the same time pure Being, a bundle of minute, unique particulars in which, by some unspeakable and yet self-evident paradox, was to be seen the divine source of all existence".[215] Turning to his bookshelves, Huxley had a similar experience: his books "glowed", their "colour was so intense, so intrinsically meaningful, that they seemed to be on the point of leaving the shelves to thrust themselves more insistently on my attention".[216] Shifting his gaze to the furniture of his study, Huxley experienced a "sacramental vision of reality":

> I was back where I had been when I was looking at the flowers – back in a world where everything shone with the Inner Light, and was infinite in its significance. The legs, for example of that chair – how miraculous their tubularity, how supernatural their polished smoothness! I spent several minutes – or was it several centuries? – not merely gazing at those bamboo legs, but actually *being* them – or rather being myself in them; or, to be still more accurate (for "I" was not involved in the case, nor in a certain sense were "they") being my Not-self in the Not-self which was the chair.[217]

This, then, is what Stace calls extrovertive experience. In *The Doors of Perception* and *Heaven and Hell* (1956), Huxley describes it as "visionary experience" and is careful to distinguish it from full-blown mystical experience: "I am not so foolish as to equate what happens under the influence of mescalin or of any other drug [...] with the realization of the end and ultimate purpose of human life: Enlightenment, the Beatific Vision".[218]

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214 Huxley, *Doors*, in *CE* 5: 161.

215 Ibid.

216 Ibid., 162.

217 Ibid., 163.

218 See ibid., 188. In *The Doors of Perception*, Huxley uses the variant spelling "mescalin", which was sometimes used in the first half of the twentieth century.

What disturbed Huxley about the mescaline experience was that it robbed him of his volition, and, in his rapt contemplation of "Eternity in a flower, Infinity in four chair legs", he lost interest in his fellow human beings.[219] When Huxley wrote *The Doors of Perception*, though, he had only taken mescaline once, and this had resulted in merely visionary experience. But when he took it under the supervision of Laura Archera (whom he refers to as a dianetic therapist in his letter to Osmond on October 25, 1955), he had a full-blown mystical experience:

> what came through the closed door was the realization – not the knowledge, for this wasn't verbal or abstract – but the direct, total awareness, from the inside, so to say, of Love as the primary and fundamental cosmic fact. The Words, of course, have a kind of indecency and must necessarily ring false, seem like twaddle. But the fact remains [...] I *was* this fact; or perhaps it would be more accurate to say that this fact occupied the place where I had been. The result was that I did not, as in the first experiment [with Osmond], feel cut off from the human world. I was intensely aware of it, but from the standpoint of the living, primordial cosmic fact of Love. And the things which had entirely occupied my attention on that first occasion I now perceived to be temptations – temptations to escape from the central reality into false, or at least imperfect and partial Nirvanas of beauty and mere knowledge.[220]

This cosmic love, he reports, obliterates the distinction between subject and object, and "substitutes the primordial fact of unity and the awareness of mutual immanence for a frenzy heightened to despair by the impossibility of that total possession of the object, at which the subject mistakenly aims".[221]

In a letter to Margaret Isherwood, Huxley explains that with psychedelics, visionary experience often metamorphoses into mystical experience.[222] In an essay from 1962, Huxley astutely describes this transition from aesthetic and visionary consciousness into mystical or cosmic consciousness. In the visionary phase, the world "reveal[s] itself as not only unimaginably beautiful, but also fathomlessly mysterious – as a multitudinous abyss of possibility forever actualizing itself into unprecedented forms".[223] In the mystical phase, the "world

219 See ibid., 169.

220 Smith, *Letters*, 769.

221 Ibid., 770.

222 See ibid., 874.

223 Aldous Huxley, "Culture and the Individual", in *LSD: The Consciousness-Expanding Drug*, ed. David Solomon (New York: G.P. Putnam, 1964), 37.

is now seen as an infinite diversity that is yet a unity, and the beholder experiences himself as being one with the infinite Oneness that manifests itself, totally present, at every point of space, at every instant in the flux of perpetual perishing and perpetual renewal".[224] There is, he continues,

> a reconciliation of opposites [...] a transcending of our ingrained subject-object relationships with things and persons; there is an immediate experience of our solidarity with all beings and a kind of organic conviction that in spite of the inscrutabilities of fate, in spite of our own dark stupidities and deliberate malevolence, yes, in spite of all that is so manifestly wrong with the world, it is yet, in some profound, paradoxical and entirely inexpressible way, All Right.[225]

After years of meditation and austerities,[226] Huxley had finally had a proper mystical experience and the impact it had on his thinking was far-reaching and profound. In a radio interview with Laura Huxley, Alan Watts states that when he first met Huxley in 1947 he was under the influence of Gerald Heard during his "ascetic period"; they were, he maintains, "mystically uptight".[227] Their attitude changed, however, as a result of their experiments with psychedelics. "To put it briefly", writes Watts in his autobiography,

> they had ceased to be Manicheans. Their vision of the divine now included nature, and they had become more relaxed and humane, so that I found myself talking to men of my own persuasion.[228]

Christopher Isherwood also observed this change in Heard. Sometime in 1953 (Heard's first mescaline experiment was in November of that year), Isherwood notes that "he seemed less dyspeptic, less puritanical" and would occasionally drink alcohol and eat meat.[229] In the same year, he began to write for a gay periodical called *One* under the pseudonym D.B. Vest, and began a close but platonic relationship with Michael Barrie.[230] Isherwood also records the

224 Ibid.

225 Ibid.

226 In his ascetic neo-Advaitin phase, Huxley had become a vegetarian, and lived frugally in the Mojave Desert at Llano del Rio between 1941 and 1947.

227 Alan Watts, radio interview with Laura Huxley, recorded in 1968 by the San Francisco Pacifica Radio station KPFA.

228 Alan Watts, *In My Own Way: An Autobiography 1915–1965* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1972), 342.

229 Isherwood, *My Guru*, 210.

230 See Falby, *Pigeonholes*, 138, 115.

disapproval of Swami Prabhavananda, who regarded the idea that psychedelic drugs could induce a state of *samadhi* as a "deadly heresy", and blamed Huxley and Heard for its dissemination.[231]

Partly as a result of his psychedelic experiences, Huxley became disenchanted with the life-denying asceticism of neo-Advaita. In a letter to a representative of the Vedanta Society on October 20, 1956, Huxley declines an invitation to speak on the grounds that he is not "a joiner of churches" and is not comfortable assuming the guru role.[232] As a result of his experiences with psychedelics, Huxley became an advocate of Tantra. At the heart of Tantric philosophy, he tells Timothy Leary, lies

> the highest possible ideal – enlightenment, not apart from the world (as with the Vedantists and the Nirvana-addicts of the Hinayana School of Buddhists) but within the world, through the world, by means of the ordinary processes of living. Tantra teaches a yoga of sex, a yoga of eating (even eating forbidden foods and drinking forbidden drinks). The sacramentalizing of common life, so that every event may become a means whereby enlightenment can be realized, is achieved, essentially, through constant awareness. This is the ultimate yoga – being aware, conscious even of the unconscious – on every level from the physiological to the spiritual.[233]

In the Chandos interview, Huxley describes Tantra as the "supreme doctrine".[234] He also praises Zen and Mahayana Buddhism for their "approach to the fathomless mystery", which "is far better than that of the Vedantic [or] Hinayana Buddhist approach which consists of this contemplation, which is intense concentration therefore almost universal *exclusion* of everything".[235] The

> whole point of the later Mahayana doctrine is that it *includes* things, it permits you to live in the world – perceiving the absolute, perceiving nirvana, not outside out as in the Hinayana tradition but perceiving it within it and realising it in acts of work and love.[236]

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231 Isherwood, *My Guru*, 219.
232 Smith, *Letters*, 810.
233 Ibid., 929.
234 John Chandos interview with Aldous Huxley recorded on July 7 and 11, 1961, in the Huxley archive of the Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center, University of Texas, Austin.
235 Ibid.
236 Ibid.

There can be, Huxley affirms, "no higher ideal of life than that".[237] It was under the influence of these world-affirming religious philosophies that he wrote his final novel *Island*.

For the first time in Huxley's fiction, sex is portrayed as a wholly positive experience. The Palanese practise *maithuna*, the "yoga of love",[238] which, Radha maintains, is superior to both *karma* and *bhakti yoga* (the yogas of action and devotion). *Maithuna*, Ranga informs Will Farnaby, "is the same as what the Oneida people called Male Continence" and "what the Roman Catholics mean by *coitus reservatus*".[239] But "[i]t's not the special technique that turns love-making into yoga", he continues, "it's the kind of awareness that the technique makes possible".[240] *Maithuna* is just one of the methods they employ to test the Sanskrit formula *tat tvam asi* (you are That).[241] The phrase is found in the *Upanishads*, which constitute the key teachings of neo-Advaita; however, the idea of proving the validity of *tat tvam asi* through sexual intercourse would be heretical to a neo-Advaitin, as well as to Huxley in 1944 when he compiled *The Perennial Philosophy.* The Palanese strain of Mahayana Buddhism, Ranga explains, came not from Ceylon but from Bengal and Tibet and is therefore informed by Tantra. "If you're a Tantrik", he tells Farnaby,

> you don't renounce the world or deny its value; you don't try to escape into a Nirvana apart from life, as the monks of the Southern Hinayana School do. No, you accept the world, and you make use of it; you make use of everything you do, of everything that happens to you, of all the things you see and hear and taste and touch, as so many means to your liberation from the prison of yourself.[242]

In contrast to the Tantric, world-affirming Palanese, the villains of the book, the Rani and her son Murugan, advocate *brahmacharya* (sexual continence) in order to enhance their spirituality: "Purity", says the Rani, "is fundamental, Purity is the *sine qua non*".[243] The Rani was educated in Switzerland, where she was introduced to Theosophy by the wife of one of her professors. She quickly proved to be an adept, and, in a manner reminiscent of the young Krishnamurti and H.P. Blavatsky, began to take instruction from the Master Koot Hoomi.

237 Ibid.
238 Huxley, *Island*, 76.
239 Ibid., 77.
240 Ibid., 78.
241 See ibid.
242 Ibid., 75–76.
243 Ibid., 55.

When Will meets her, she is conspiring to sell Pala's oil concession in order to finance a "World-Wide Crusade of the Spirit".[244] She has brought up her son to "think of Woman as essentially Holy" and boasts of how, while she was lecturing abroad, the Palanese were unable to corrupt Murugan by sending first a girl his own age to seduce him, then, when she failed, an older woman.[245] Murugan's fortitude in this respect is a result of his homosexuality, rather than his adherence to *brahmacharya*.[246] While he deplores *maithuna* and pretends to be celibate, he is having an affair, Will suspects, with Colonel Dipa. Reflecting on his meeting with Dipa, Will recalls that the Colonel "had been more than fatherly towards his young protégé, and towards the Colonel, Murugan had been a good deal more than filial – he had been positively adoring".[247] His suspicions appear to be confirmed when Dipa allows Murugan to drive his Mercedes: "At the wheel of the Colonel's sports car Murugan was a maniac. Only an infatuated lover would have entrusted himself, not to mention his guest, to such a chauffeur".[248] Later on, Will refers to Murugan as "Antinous" (a Greek youth beloved by the Emperor Hadrian) and wonders whether he had been initiated into homosexuality by boys his own age or whether "some older, more experienced and authoritative pederast" had performed this function.[249] Jeffrey Kripal, commenting on the "significant shift in Huxley's spiritual worldview", notes the contrast between his "carefully diplomatic foreword" to *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* (1942), "a book about a Hindu saint who considered all women to be aspects of the Mother Goddess and so would have sex with none of them", and *Island*, in which he was "suggesting openly" that "'to think of women as essentially Holy' was an expression of a conflicted male homosexuality anxious to avoid any and all heterosexual contact".[250] "It is much better, the novel now suggests", Kripal continues, "to think of the erotic union of man and woman as holy, that is, to see the sacred in the sexual and the sexual in the sacred".[251]

Kripal argues that the Palanese practice of *maithuna* derives, not from Tantra, but from Noyes and Freud.[252] Through practising *maithuna*, Ranga tells Farnaby, the Palanese regain the polymorphous perversity of children, who

244 Ibid., 53.
245 Ibid., 55.
246 See Kripal, *Esalen*, 89n7 for this point.
247 Huxley, *Island*, 23.
248 Ibid.
249 Ibid., 55.
250 Kripal, *Esalen*, 89.
251 Ibid.
252 See Kripal, "An Island in Mind", 38.

enjoy a "sexuality diffused throughout the whole organism" rather than focused on the genitals.[253] I am inclined to agree with Kripal since the Tantric practice of *maithuna* requires much more than mere mindfulness and a "special technique" to render it sacred. The term Tantra covers a multitude of traditions, schools, sects, doctrines, practices and texts, and thus whatever I say about "Tantra" here will be a generalisation and will not hold true for all the schools, sects and so on. One of the key differences between neo-Advaita and Tantra is that where the former considers salvation (*moksha*) to be liberation from this world and the cycle of rebirth, the goal for Tantric practitioners is this-worldly self-deification through the acquisition of *siddhis* (supernatural powers) and immortality. David Gordon White notes that there were two principle "styles" in Tantric Yoga: an exoteric path that involved visualisation of the deity with which one hoped to identify, "ritual offerings, worship, and the use of mantras"; and an esoteric path undertaken by elite adepts (*vīras*) that aimed at the "expansion of consciousness to a divine level" through the consumption of the five forbidden substances (*pañcatattva*) noted above.[254] In this context, *maithuna* is not an act or ritual to be performed but a substance to be consumed, and can be construed as either the menstrual blood of a *yoginī* (generally a low-caste woman) that is imbibed in oral sex, or a mixture of semen, menses and sexual fluids that is reabsorbed by the *vīra* in the practice of urethral suction (*vajrolī mudrā*).[255] In early Tantra (c. tenth to eleventh century CE) this would catalyse the divine or non-dual expansion of consciousness.

In later Tantric and *haṭhayogic* texts, this divine consciousness is achieved through the ascension of *kuṇḍalinī* (the female serpent energy coiled at the base of the spine) through the *cakras* (energy centres) of the subtle body until it reaches the crown of the head (*sahasrāra cakra*), where it is transformed into divine nectar (*amṛta*), which renders the body immortal.[256] According to Mircea Eliade (an author whom Huxley recommended to Timothy Leary on the subject of Tantra),[257] the awakening and upward flow of *kuṇḍalinī* is facilitated by *kumbhaka* (breath retention), *khecarī mudrā* (rolling the tongue back into the throat to block the nasal cavity) and by *maithuna*. The aim of these practices is to achieve the "simultaneous 'immobility' of breath, thought, and semen", which is required to push the *kuṇḍalinī* up the central energy channel

253 Huxley, *Island*, 77.

254 See White, "Yoga, Brief History of an Idea", 13.

255 See ibid., 14 and idem, *Kiss of the Yoginī: "Tantric Sex" and its South Asian Contexts* (London: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 11, 84.

256 See White, "Yoga, Brief History of an Idea", 14–15 and idem, introduction to *Tantra in Practice* (Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2000), 15.

257 See Smith, *Letters*, 929.

(*susumna-nāḍī*) and to pierce the *cakras*.[258] This is the only form of *maithuna* so far that does not involve ejaculation, and in this very limited sense it is comparable to the Palanese practice of *maithuna.* On a symbolic level, *maithuna* enacts the reunion of Śiva (the *yogi*) and Śakti (the *yoginī*) into the primordial unity (the *Urgrund*); this reunion is also enacted in the *yogi's* body by the congress of *kuṇḍalinī* (Śakti) and *sahasrāra cakra* (Śiva).[259] Before *maithuna* can take place, the *yoginī* must be rendered divine by *nyāsas*, that is the "ritual projection of divinities onto various parts of the body", months of slavish attendance by the *yogi* (as befits a goddess), ceremonial bathing and adornment with flowers.[260] If, in the presence of the *yoginī*, Eliade maintains, "one does not find in one's inmost being the same terrifying emotion that one feels before the revelation of the cosmic mystery [Śakti], there is no rite, there is only a secular act, with all the familiar consequences", such as bad karma.[261] In later Tantric traditions, the sexual component of *maithuna* became increasingly sublimated into substitutes and symbolic unions,[262] such as the visualised union of Śakti (*kuṇḍalinī*) and Śiva (*sahasrāra cakra*) mentioned by Woodroffe above.

If the Palanese version of *maithuna*, then, is more akin to Noyes' Male Continence and Complex Marriage than to the Tantric rituals outlined above, it nonetheless conveys the life-affirming message of Tantra that the world is not an illusion to be renounced (as in neo-Advaita and Theravada Buddhism), it is Śakti, an emanation or hypostasis of Śiva in a spirit of playfulness (*lila*). Thus esoteric Tantric adepts can take the "low road" to divinity by consuming urine, faeces, menstrual blood and human flesh because all these things, far from being impure, are divine, an emanation of the Tantric godhead.[263] In *Island*, *maithuna* is favourably compared to the life-denying asceticism of the Rani and the neurotic Western attitude to sex of the Englishman Will Farnaby. Farnaby suffers from the Madonna-whore complex identified by Freud. After Farnaby's Aunt Mary, the "only person [he] ever loved", dies of cancer, he perceives his fellow human beings as "maggots" until he meets Molly, whom he describes as his aunt's "successor" and marries out of gratitude for her kindness.[264] But Molly is a sexless "Sister of Mercy" and Farnaby's attempts at lovemaking end

258 Mircea Eliade, *Yoga: Immortality and Freedom*, trans. Willard R. Trask (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1958), 248.
259 Ibid., 206, 266.
260 Ibid., 210, 260, 266–267.
261 Ibid., 259.
262 See White, introduction to *Tantra in Practice*, 17.
263 See White, "Yoga, Brief History of an Idea", 14.
264 Huxley, *Island*, 100.

in impotence, leading him to take a series of lovers, first a secretary who works in his office, then Rachel, "a little Jewish girl that Molly had helped with money while she was studying at the Slade".[265] But his pleasure with Rachel is muted by her intellectual pretensions, whereas her successor Babs is a total plebeian, and it is the "almost unfathomable depths of her mindlessness and vulgarity" that Farnaby finds so intoxicating, and that spurs him on to leave Molly, who dies in a car crash after he tells her their marriage is over.[266]

But unlike Sebastian Barnack – whose wife dies, it is implied, as a result of his philandering, and the guilt he feels over this renders him susceptible to the mystical promptings of Bruno Rontini and a new ascetic mode of life – Farnaby is encouraged by Susila and Dr MacPhail to affirm the world, rather than renounce it. And it is by taking the "*moksha*-medicine" (the psilocybin mushrooms the Palanese use as a sacrament), that Farnaby is able to do this. The bogus *brahmachari* Murugan (who has never taken it) dismisses the effects of *moksha*-medicine as "false *samadhi*": the "real thing", he claims, "only comes to people after years of meditation and *tapas*" (spiritual austerities) and chastity.[267] But as with mescaline and LSD, the *moksha*-medicine is capable of producing "the full-blown mystical experience".[268] At first, with his eyes closed, Farnaby experiences being as light: "Its presence was his absence. William Asquith Farnaby – ultimately and essentially there was no such person. Ultimately and essentially there was only a luminous bliss, only a knowledgeless understanding, only union with unity in a limitless, undifferentiated awareness".[269] While listening to the Fourth Brandenburg Concerto by Bach (which Huxley listened to when he had his first mystical – as opposed to merely visionary – experience on mescaline with Laura),[270] Farnaby experiences "eternity": the music "was not merely an unowned Thing in Itself; it was also, in some impossible way, a Present Event with an infinite duration. Or rather […] it was without duration".[271] When he opens his eyes, the world is transfigured: a table and chair are described as being "carved out of some material that looked like living agate", and the plaster wall behind them is a "matrix of living and

265 Ibid., 103.
266 Ibid., 109.
267 Ibid., 137.
268 Ibid., 138.
269 Ibid., 263.
270 Huxley does not include this detail in his letter to Osmond (quoted above), but it is included in Laura Archera Huxley, *This Timeless Moment*, 146.
271 Huxley, *Island*, 266.

pulsating mother-of-pearl".[272] The books in Susila's bookcase appear as jewels (Huxley observed the same phenomenon in his first mescaline experiment with Osmond): "Narrow slabs of emerald and topaz, or ruby and sapphire and lapis lazuli, blazing away, row above row, like so many bricks in the wall of the New Jerusalem".[273] When he finally looks at Susila he realises the meaning of the word "love": in the past, he says, the word was "an obscenity I couldn't pronounce", whereas "now I can understand what it means when they say, 'God is love'".[274] And Farnaby, or the ego formerly known as "Farnaby", is immersed in this love, indistinguishable from this love, and this love is immanent in the world rather than beyond it or outside it. Earlier, Susila warns him away from the pure *nirvana* he experiences with his eyes closed – "Bodhisattvas", she tells him, "dilute their Nirvana with equal parts of love and work" – and leads him to a point where, as Murugan arrives with Colonel Dipa's soldiers for the *coup d'état*, he perceives *nirvana* in *samsara*: "Will looked down at his burning bush and saw the Suchness of the world and his own being blazing away with the clear light that was also (how obviously now!) compassion".[275]

Some critics approach the novel from a Manichaean perspective and contend that Dipa and Murugan are the representatives of darkness triumphing over the good of Pala.[276] But in *Island*, Huxley emphatically rejects dualism in favour of the monism of Tantra and Zen. In the Tantric scheme, Colonel Dipa and Murugan and the Rani are equally a manifestation of Śakti as the virtuous Palanese. For instance, Farnaby flippantly asks Susila if "hunger and overbreeding and Colonel Dipa" are "pure Suchness", and she replies: "Of course".[277] Likewise, in the Zen tradition, if *nirvana* and *samsara* are the same, then again Dipa *et al.* are part of it. The mistake is to imagine that Pala is a paradise on earth, with Murugan as Eve inaugurating the Fall, whereas in both Zen Buddhism and Tantra the whole earth is Eden, and one of the functions of the *moksha*-medicine is to enable the Palanese to perceive that the world is Śiva in the form of Śakti and that everything is divine.

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272 Ibid., 269.

273 Ibid., 270.

274 Ibid., 280.

275 Ibid., 265, 285.

276 See for example Philip Thody, *Aldous Huxley: A Biographical Introduction* (London: Studio Vista, 1973), 126 and David Bradshaw, introduction to *Island*, xiii, who regards the novel as "perhaps Huxley's most pessimistic book".

277 Huxley, *Island*, 237.

Conclusion

Before the mystical turn in Huxley's work, his heroes spiritualise women and are disillusioned by the mundane reality of sex, which inspires remorse, guilt and jealousy. During the ascetic phase, starting with *Eyeless in Gaza*, Huxley's protagonists are philanderers who are moved by a spiritual crisis to renounce sex in order to pursue the mystical path. In the late 1940s and 50s, Huxley was drawn to Taoism, which was more life-affirming than neo-Advaita, and sex is portrayed in *Ape and Essence* and *The Genius and the Goddess* as being potentially compatible with the Tao or the Order of the Things. Huxley's psychedelic experiments catalysed the Tantric turn in his work, in which the body and the world are perceived as sacred, and in *Island* sex is represented as a sacrament. However, as I have demonstrated, Huxley's notion of *maithuna* owes more to John Humphrey Noyes' practice of Male Continence than to the Tantric tradition. The this-worldly religious philosophies Huxley praises in *Island* (Tantra, Mahayana and Zen Buddhism) would be become part of the alternative spirituality practised by the spiritual seekers of the counterculture and the New Age. In the next chapter, I examine how Huxley's eclectic, experiential spirituality in *Island* closely resembles the spiritual supermarket associated with the New Age; and his emphasis on self-development and living in harmony with nature, as opposed to transcending the self and world, would help to inspire the Deep Ecology movement.

CHAPTER 6

Huxley's Legacy

In this final chapter, I examine Huxley's legacy, which I divide into three sections. First, Huxley's notion of "human potentialities", which inspired the founders of the Esalen Institute in Big Sur, California, and the Human Potential Movement that arose in its wake. In this section, I also investigate the French novelist Michel Houellebecq's claims that Huxley was one of the key influences on Esalen and the New Age movement. Second, Huxley's insistence on the link between psychedelic drugs and spiritual experience, and his influence on key figures in the psychedelic culture of the 1950s and 60s, such as Humphry Osmond, Albert Hofmann and Timothy Leary. I also examine some of Huxley's psychedelic predecessors and challenge the canard that Aleister Crowley introduced Huxley to mescaline in the form of peyote. Third, Huxley's influence on the New Age and the Deep Ecology movements.

Human Potentialities

In the last years of his life, Huxley gave a series of lectures at American universities on the subject of what he termed the "human potentialities". Richard Price, one of the co-founders of Esalen, heard Huxley speak at the University of California, San Francisco Medical Center in 1960. I shall examine this lecture in some detail, as Huxley's notion of the "human potentialities" have been misrepresented, both by the founders of Esalen and by later scholars. Huxley begins by noting that there has been no Darwinian evolution in *Homo sapiens* in the past twenty thousand years.[1] However, he notes, "[w]e have in the course of these twenty thousand years actualized an immense number of things which at that time and for many, many centuries

1 There is perhaps some margin for misunderstanding in the lecture version (see footnote below), but in the essay "Human Potentialities" there is no ambiguity on this point: "The native or genetic capacities of today's bright city child are no better than the native capacities of a bright child born into a family of upper Palaeolithic cave-dwellers". Aldous Huxley, "Human Potentialities", in *The Humanist Frame*, ed. Julian Huxley (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1961), 417. See also Aldous Huxley, "Latent Human Potentialities", in *The Human Situation*, ed. Piero Ferrucci (London: Flamingo, 1994), 223, a lecture delivered at the University of California, Santa Barbara, on December 14, 1959, in which Huxley affirms: "Our biological make-up has not really changed since the upper Palaeolithic".

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thereafter were wholly potential and latent in man".[2] The advance of human knowledge, the invention of the book and data storage, the rise of technology and so forth, has resulted then not from any evolutionary leap but from exploiting our existing potential. "This", Huxley opines,

> gives us reason for tempered optimism that there are still a great many potentialities – for rationality, for affection and kindliness, for creativity – still lying latent in man; and, since everything has speeded up so enormously in recent years, that we shall find methods for going almost as far beyond the point we have reached now within a few hundred years as we have succeeded in going beyond our Aurignacean ancestors in twenty thousand years. I think this is not an entirely fantastic belief. The neurologists have shown us that no human being has ever made use of as much as ten percent of all the neurons in his brain. And perhaps, if we set about it in the right way, we might be able to produce extraordinary things out of this strange piece of work that a man is.[3]

What Huxley goes on to propose is to obtain a substantial research grant to investigate the viability of a number of potentially promising techniques that might improve education, well-being, creativity and cognitive efficiency. He starts by advocating "differential education" that makes allowance for the differences in human types, and here he rehearses William Sheldon's psychophysical classification (endomorph, mesomorph, ectomorph) and correlates these with the three paths of yoga (*bhakti*, *karma*, *jñana*) in the *Bhagavad Gita*, and proposes that education will be far more efficient if children are taught according to their type, also taking into account Jung's distinction between introvert and extravert.[4] In the emerging field of pharmacology, Huxley predicts

2 Quoted in Walter Truett Anderson, *The Upstart Spring: Esalen and the Human Potential Movement; The First Twenty Years* (Lincoln, NE: iUniverse, Inc., 2004), 11. Anderson is quoting from a recording of the actual lecture Price heard. My analysis is based on Huxley's "Education on the Nonverbal Level" lecture given at MIT in April 1961, which is apparently the same as the one given at the Medical Center, of which there seems to be no extant recording. See "Aldous Huxley: 'Human Potentialities [the website gets the title wrong]'", Psychedelic Salon, accessed March 1, 2016, https://psychedelicsalon.com/podcasts-454-aldous-huxley-human-potentialities/. I have also drawn on Huxley's essays "Human Potentialities" and "Education on the Nonverbal Level", which are more formal versions of his lectures at the San Francisco Medical Center and MIT, the earlier essay "The Education of an Amphibian" (1956) and the 1959 lecture "Latent Human Potentialities".

3 Quoted in Anderson. *Upstart Spring*, 11.

4 See Huxley, "Education on the Nonverbal Level" lecture at MIT and "Human Potentialities", 421–422.

that drugs may soon be able to increase our powers of concentration and decrease our need for sleep, thereby enhancing our mental efficiency. Noting the link between happiness, optimal mental functioning and creativity, Huxley asserts that a harmless drug that promotes euphoria would be of great benefit. Such a drug would also lead to a refinement of morality, given Bertrand Russell's correlation of happiness with probity and misery with immorality.

In light of the largely verbal and symbolic nature of education, Huxley proposes a mandatory course in the "nonverbal humanities". Huxley had for many years pointed out the dangers of apprehending the world through the distorting medium of language, and stressed that humans were amphibians who inhabited many worlds at the same time, the world of the internal systems (nervous, endocrine, respiratory, etc.), the physical environment and the "homemade universe of words and other symbols", and were susceptible both to spiritual impulses towards "self-transcendence" as well as the chthonic urges of the id and the unconscious.[5] He approvingly quotes Spinoza:

> "Make the body capable of doing many things [...]. This will help you to perfect the mind and come to the intellectual love of God". Substitute "psychophysical organism" for "body", and you have here the summary of a program for universal education on the non-symbolic level, supplemented by a statement of the reasons why such an education is desirable and indeed, if the child is to grow into a fully human being, absolutely necessary.[6]

To this end, Huxley recommends the Alexander technique. In "The Education of an Amphibian", Huxley notes the influence of Alexander's work on the psychologist and education reformer John Dewey. "Alexander's fundamental discovery", writes Huxley,

> is that there are, in Dewey's words, "certain basic, central organic habits and attitudes, which condition every act we perform, every use we make of ourselves". When we lose these natural good habits and impose upon ourselves improper habits of use, everything goes wrong, not merely in the body, but also (insofar as physical events condition mental events) in the mind. [...] Alexander's technique, writes Dewey, "gives the educator a standard of psycho-physical health – in which what we call morality is included. It also supplies the means whereby that standard may be

5 See Huxley, "Education on the Nonverbal Level", in *CE* 6: 304.
6 Ibid., 307.

> progressively and endlessly achieved. [...] It bears the same relation to education that education itself bears to all other human activities".[7]

In his lecture, Huxley also refers to the necessity of improving sensory perception, by which he presumably means the Bates method, which had helped him restore his ravaged eyesight to the extent that he no longer wore glasses, and the visual education methods employed by Samuel Renshaw.[8] In *The Art of Seeing* (1942), Huxley's book about the Bates method, he notes that for long-sighted people like himself the strain involved in trying to focus the eyes impairs the vision, thereby creating a negative feedback loop, with worse vision leading to ever-greater strain.[9] This is what, in the Alexander technique, is known as "end-gaining", concentrating solely on the end (better vision) and ignoring the "means-whereby" that end is to be achieved.[10] A key part of the Bates method was learning to relax the eye and "to train the mind to interpret what the eye sends it and not to interfere with the functioning of the eye by straining or staring".[11] Renshaw was best known as an exponent of Gestalt psychology, but he also developed techniques that facilitated the improvement of memory, the refinement of sensory taste and the rapidity of visual perception. He achieved the latter through the use of a tachistoscope that projects images that last for only a few hundredths of a second. This prevents the ego from intruding and trying to apprehend the object by imposing verbal concepts and labels, and, as with the Bates method, allows what Huxley terms the "vegetative soul and the deeper not-selves" of the non-conscious organism to do the work.[12]

Huxley praises the Gestalt therapy pioneered by Frederick Perls, Ralph Hefferline and Paul Goodman. What impressed him was its emphasis on awareness of the present moment, as opposed to the Freudian obsession with the past. In "Latent Human Potentialities", Huxley approvingly notes that Perls *et al.* recommend that their patients compose sentences that begin "Here and now, I perceive", in order to get them to cultivate awareness of the present, a

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7 Huxley, "Education of an Amphibian", in *CE* 5: 198. In his MIT lecture, Huxley also reads a portion of the Dewey quote above. See also Huxley "Human Potentialities", 426–427. For more on Huxley, Dewey and Alexander see Zigler, *Educational Prophecies of Aldous Huxley*.

8 For the improvement of Huxley's eyesight, see Sawyer, *Aldous Huxley*, 111. For mention of Bates and Renshaw in conjunction with "psycho-physical" education, see "Education of an Amphibian", in *CE* 5: 202–203. In his lecture, Huxley mentions Renshaw but does not elaborate on his techniques.

9 See Aldous Huxley, *The Art of Seeing* (London: Flamingo, 1994), 26–27.

10 See ibid., 40–41.

11 Huxley, quoted in Sawyer, *Aldous Huxley*, 111.

12 Huxley, "Education of an Amphibian", in *CE* 5: 203.

function which Huxley gives to the mynah birds of Pala, who continually call "Attention" and "Here and now, boys".[13] Huxley also mentions the earlier work of the Swiss psychiatrist Roger Vittoz, who helped his patients to be more receptive to the present, and what was happening both within themselves and in their environment.[14] To improve awareness of "inner and outer reality on its nonsymbolic levels", Huxley recommends the dialogue between Śiva and Devi[15] in the anthology *Zen Flesh, Zen Bones* (1957).[16] Although Devi is already enlightened, she asks Śiva to dilate on his "reality" and the means whereby others may attain it. In reply, Śiva outlines 112 exercises to aid enlightenment. Three examples will suffice to give a general impression:

> 1. Radiant one, this experience may dawn between two breaths. After breath comes in (down) and just before turning up (out) – *the beneficence*.
> 11. Place your whole attention in your nerve, delicate as the lotus thread, in the center of your spinal column. In such *be transformed.*
> 16. In the beginning and gradual refinement of the sound of any letter, *awake*.[17]

Huxley concludes by predicting that if money were raised to investigate the different methods for realising and implementing these latent human potentialities, a "revolution" in education could be achieved. Price told Michael Murphy (the other founder of Esalen) about Huxley's notion of human potentialities and Murphy wrote to Huxley asking if he and Price might visit him when they passed through California in June 1961. At this stage, Price and Murphy were still uncertain about whether to pursue their ambition of creating a centre for alternative spirituality and wanted to ask Huxley's advice. Huxley was in London at the time, but suggested that they visit Gerald Heard in Santa Monica.[18] Walter Truett Anderson represents the ideas of Huxley and Heard as being essentially the same, with a difference only in degree: Huxley "diffidently advocated a research project" while Heard believed that humankind was "at the turning point and could be saved from destruction only by a great leap,

13 See Huxley, "Latent Human Potentialities", 232.
14 See Huxley, "Human Potentialities", 425.
15 In his lecture, Huxley refers to Śiva's divine consort Parvati (which is quite correct); in *Zen Flesh, Zen Bones* the name given is Devi, which merely denotes a female deity.
16 Huxley, "Education on the Nonverbal Level", in *CE* 6: 307–308.
17 Paul Reps, ed., *Zen Flesh, Zen Bones: A Collection of Zen and Pre-Zen Writings* (Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, 1989), 160–162. Huxley provides some further examples in his essay "Human Potentialities", 425.
18 See Kripal, *Esalen*, 85–86 and Anderson, *Upstart Spring*, 12.

a new vision".[19] Heard was extremely enthusiastic about Price and Murphy's proposal and their meeting lasted for four hours, during which time they discussed "many things, all connected to Heard's vision of a huge transformation of the human species that was, he was sure, trying to take place".[20]

In an online essay, Murphy recalls the meeting: "Part of [Heard's] vision that appealed to me was seeing the mystical life in an evolutionary context, which put him squarely on par with Aurobindo", and this gave him the confidence to push ahead with his plans for Esalen.[21] Kripal notes that Aurobindo attempted a synthesis of Western science and Indian mysticism. He predicted that through a process of what Kripal calls "occult evolution" a "Superman" would come to pass, giving rise to "a diversely gifted race of 'gnostic beings' or 'cosmic individuals' who [would] consciously embody a full integration of Matter, Mind, and Spirit".[22] This "Superman" would be endowed with a "Superbody" (the latter is Kripal's term), and Kripal invokes the *siddhis* as affording us "a glimpse of the occult biology of this mystical body and its emergent potentialities".[23] Heard's belief in spiritual evolution was, as I shall show, very much of a piece with the evolutionary mysticism of Murphy and Aurobindo. However, it should be emphasised that Huxley did not share this belief.

In *The Ascent of Humanity* (1929), as noted in Chapter 4, Heard argues that man was originally a tribal being, endowed with "co-consciousness" that enabled him to communicate telepathically with the other members of his tribe; this gave way to "self-consciousness" (our present age of bumptious individualism), which Heard regards as an anomalous stage of evolution; the final stage, Heard predicts, is "superconsciousness", in which state man will be simultaneously aware of his self and the divine Ground.[24] In addition to the welter of influences examined in Chapter 4, Heard seems to have been influenced by the French philosopher Henri Bergson, who argued that the evolution of man was guided by the *élan vital*, which would eventually produce a race of "mystic-saints";[25] if he did not read Bergson at first hand, he would have encountered his ideas through George Bernard Shaw, who was an early influence on Heard, and who expounded Bergson's creative evolution in his play *Back to*

19 Anderson, *Upstart Spring*, 12.

20 Ibid.

21 Michael Murphy, "Totally on Fire", accessed June 7, 2018, https://www.geraldheard.com/writings-and-recollections/2017/8/2/totally-on-fire. See also Kripal, *Esalen*, 92.

22 Kripal, *Esalen*, 65.

23 Ibid., 66.

24 See Heard, *Ascent of Humanity*, 14–15, 38.

25 See Jay Stevens, *Storming Heaven: LSD and the American Dream* (New York: HarperPerennial, 1988), 69–71.

Methuselah (1921).[26] Huxley admired Bergson and appropriated some of his ideas,[27] but he was too much of a Darwinian to regard evolution as teleological. For Huxley, as for his grandfather T.H. Huxley, evolution was not creative and did not have an ultimate goal towards which it was shepherding *Homo sapiens*. Natural selection did not produce perfection, neither physical nor spiritual, it ensured the survival of profitable variations in a species.[28] The mistake is to regard evolution as a sentient entity, endowed with agency, whereas for Darwin natural selection was a principle. Furthermore, Huxley objected to Heard's "great generalizations" in *The Ascent of Humanity*.[29] And Sawyer notes that when Huston Smith met Huxley in the summer of 1945, the latter informed him that he did not subscribe to Heard's theory of spiritual evolution.[30]

But both Anderson and Kripal present Huxley as an exponent of spiritual evolution and this leads to confusion over the nature of Huxley's human potentialities. For Anderson, the "Great Evolutionary Leap" was the key philosophy at Esalen:

> Huxley had alluded to such a leap in his Human Potentialities lectures and had described some aspects of a human potentialities utopia in his novel *Island*. He seemed to think that the leap was a possibility. Heard, his more volatile sidekick, believed it was inevitable.[31]

But, as I have shown, Huxley wanted to implement certain educational techniques, forms of psychology, spiritual exercises and so on that would help human beings to maximise their inherent potential, and they were not contingent on an evolutionary advance. In *Island*, Huxley created a utopian community that put some of these educational measures into practice, but there is no Palanese spiritual Superman endowed with *siddhis* such as telepathy or precognition. Indeed, the *siddhis* are represented as part of the Rani's Theosophical path, and considered irrelevant to the Tantric mysticism practised by the Palanese: "As one advances along the Path", the Rani tells Will, "all the

26 See Falby, *Pigeonholes*, 12.

27 For instance, the notion he advances in *Doors of Perception* that each person is capable of remembering everything he or she has experienced and of perceiving everything that is occurring in the universe; however, due to the operation of a "reducing valve" the brain filters out everything apart from what is necessary to ensure individual survival. For more on Huxley and Bergson, see Poller, "Beyond the Subliminal Mind", 258–260.

28 See Charles Darwin, *On the Origin of Species* (London: John Murray, 1859), 207–208.

29 See Smith, *Letters*, 322.

30 See Sawyer, "Huxley, Heard, and Huston", 323.

31 Anderson, *Upstart Spring*, 295.

sidhis, all the psychic gifts and miraculous powers, develop spontaneously".[32] Murugan boasts that the Rani has taken her "Fourth Initiation", referring to Leadbeater's Neo-Theosophical occult hierarchy, a grade equivalent to that of the Buddhist *arhat*, and one that both Besant and Leadbeater claimed to have attained.[33] On the other hand, Vijaya refers to telepathy and clairvoyance as "amusing pre-mystical stuff", a spiritual gewgaw when set beside the "full-blown mystical experience" of "One in all and All in one".[34] For the inhabitants of Pala, the *moksha*-medicine produces what Heard terms "superconsciousness" in the present, they do not need to wait for an evolutionary leap to make this possible.

Kripal argues that Huxley linked the traditions of Zen, Taoism and Tantra "to the scientific insights of Darwinian evolution and proposed that the latter should now be realised through conscious contemplative practice in a way that uncannily foreshadows Murphy's own 'evolutionary Tantra'".[35] This implies that Huxley was an advocate of what Kripal terms "evolutionary mysticism"; in a footnote, he directs the reader to the following passage from *Island* to support his position, in which Shanta is speaking to Will Farnaby:

> Darwin took the old Totemism and raised it to the level of biology. The fertility cults reappeared as genetics and Havelock Ellis. And now it's up to us to take another half turn up the spiral. Darwinism was the old Neolithic Wisdom turned into scientific concepts. The new conscious wisdom – the kind of wisdom that was prophetically glimpsed in Zen and Taoism and Tantra – is biological theory realized in living practice, is Darwinism raised to the level of compassion and spiritual insight.[36]

Kripal associates the word "spiral" with evolution,[37] but the advent of Darwinism represents an epistemological advance rather than an evolutionary one. What Huxley is driving at here is illuminated by his 1959 lecture "More Nature in Art", in which he explains that originally "primitive man" felt himself to be a part of nature, as can be seen in "such notions as totemism, which defines man's relationship to animals and even his identity with them", and "fertility

32 Huxley, *Island*, 51.

33 For Leadbeater's spiritual hierarchy, see Tillett, *Elder Brother*, 104–105 and Poller, "'Under a glamour'", 79.

34 Huxley, *Island*, 138.

35 Kripal, *Esalen*, 90–91. Kripal's work has been a source of consistent inspiration and it is only with the greatest respect that I venture to disagree with him.

36 Huxley, *Island*, 193–194.

37 See Kripal, *Authors of the Impossible*, 71.

rites, which insist on the fact that human sexual processes are identical with those of nature".[38] But with the rise of Christianity, man and nature were separated, the former was pre-eminent by virtue of having a soul and was given "dominion" by God over the beasts of the field, the birds of the air and so on.[39] However, Darwin overthrew the idea of *Homo sapiens* as special, fashioned in the image of God, and re-established him as descended from the ape and as such part of nature. It is in this sense that Darwin raised Totemism to the level of biology. "We seem to have passed on a kind of spiral course", Huxley affirms,

> through the totemistic stage – a very early stage of *cultural evolution* – into a more self-conscious stage in which a sharp line was drawn between man and nature, and around to a point immediately above the totemistic stage which is an analogue to it on the scientific level. We see the old intuitive feeling for nature transformed into the ideas of ecology.[40]

What Shanta and Huxley refer to as the "new conscious wisdom", then, does not anticipate the evolutionary mysticism of Murphy, rather it is a reverent attitude to nature that derives not merely from humans' place *in* nature (as opposed to apart from it, exploiting it as we see fit under our divine imprimatur), but from the recognition "glimpsed in Zen and Taoism and Tantra" that nature is sacred, as human beings are sacred, and should be treated accordingly.

For Huxley, psychic or spiritual evolution was redundant when one could have a mystical experience via the *moksha*-medicine now, rather than waiting for superconsciousness to arise spontaneously via evolution. For Heard, on the other hand: "Consciousness evolves, its evolution is spiral, all history and all the works produced by man are shadows and symptoms of that evolution".[41] Heard did not believe in a blind Darwinian evolution, contingent on random mutations and natural selection, but the directed evolution or orthogenesis propounded by H.F. Osborn.[42] Orthogenesis was often believed to be facilitated by Lamarckism, in other words the inheritance of acquired characteristics, and this was also endorsed by Heard: "Neo-Lamarckianism", he writes, appears to be a "more satisfactory conception of the cause of evolution than aimless Natural Selection".[43] However, Huxley explicitly rejects orthogenesis and Lamarckism in *Ends and Means* (1937), written at the height of his close

38 Aldous Huxley, "More Nature in Art", in *The Human Situation*, 30.
39 See Genesis 1: 28 and Psalms 8: 5–8.
40 Huxley, "More Nature in Art", 31; my italics.
41 Heard, *Third Morality*, 165.
42 See ibid., 104.
43 Ibid., 177.

association with Heard: "If characters acquired as a result of more or less intelligently directed effort are inherited, then we should expect evolution to be a rapid process. But in fact it is extremely slow".[44] In addition, he argues that orthogenesis and Lamarckism fail to account for the fact that "most mutations are demonstrably deleterious", whereas if evolution was in fact teleological one would expect mutations to be beneficial.[45] It might be objected that biological and spiritual evolution are two separate things, but Heard believed that whatever was responsible for the former would facilitate the latter.

Mistaking Huxley as an advocate of evolutionary mysticism, it is perhaps unsurprising that Kripal infers that Huxley's latent human potentialities refer (among other things) to the *siddhis*: "Huxley used the expression 'human potentialities' to argue that human consciousness and the human body possess vast untapped resources of Mind and energy", which led Murphy to "suggest that the human potential includes all sorts of extraordinary powers that are 'supernormal'", such as clairvoyance, telepathy, levitation and flight.[46] Presumably, the "untapped resources of Mind and energy" Kripal mentions refer to Huxley's supposition that potentially the human mind has access to Mind at Large, but in order to prevent us from being overwhelmed by this cosmic data dump the brain contains a filter or "reducing valve" so we can focus on our own local concerns (food, shelter and so forth).[47] Drugs such as mescaline widen the valve, allowing the doors of perception to be cleansed. People who exhibit supernormal powers, such as telepathy and clairvoyance, are born with wider reducing valves and garner their paranormal information from Mind at Large.[48]

For Heard, who believed that spirit mediums and clairvoyants derived their messages and information from an impersonal psychic field comparable to Huxley's Mind at Large, the work of the Society for Psychical Research in investigating the ostensibly growing numbers of people possessed of supernormal powers seemed to indicate that an evolutionary shift was under way from the benighted era of self-consciousness to the enlightened era of superconsciousness.[49] But unlike Heard, Huxley did not think supernormal powers would be rewarded by natural selection. He predicted that the development of telepathy en masse would lead to the end of mental privacy (i.e. individualism), while

44 Huxley, "Beliefs", in *CE* 4: 361.

45 Ibid.

46 Jeffrey J. Kripal, *Mutants and Mystics: Science Fiction, Superhero Comics, and the Paranormal* (London: University of Chicago Press, 2011), 181–182. See also idem, *Esalen*, 88, 450.

47 See Huxley, *Doors*, in *CE* 5: 163–164.

48 See Aldous Huxley, "A Case for ESP, PK, and Psi", in *CE* 5: 152.

49 See Heard, *Ascent of Humanity*, 297, 324.

widespread precognition would "induce an attitude of fatalistic resignation wholly incompatible with successful living".[50] In the same essay, Huxley also notes the dangers of being distracted by the *siddhis* of the yoga tradition. According to Huxley, the supernormal powers that are held to be attainable on the austere path to *kaivalya* (the ultimate goal of *pātañjali yoga*) can be the spiritual undoing of the yogi, reducing him to a mere "wonderworker" in thrall to this-worldly power and thereby forfeiting a shot at permanent transcendence.[51] For Huxley, psychics and spirit mediums were the equivalent of yogis who got distracted by the *siddhis* and failed to push ahead to full enlightenment, they did not presage a new evolutionary leap for humankind.

Kripal also contends that Julian Huxley shares something of Murphy's "evolutionary vision".

> In 1942, in his classic *Evolution: The Modern Synthesis*, Julian encouraged his readers to own their own role in determining the "purpose of the future of man" and to cease putting human responsibilities "on to the shoulders of mythical gods or metaphysical absolutes". In short [...] he suggested that we must now evolve ourselves.[52]

But Kripal fails to recognise that when Julian Huxley writes about humans taking responsibility for the direction of evolution, he is referring to eugenics. Julian was a member of the British Eugenics Society and later served as both vice-president and president, and, as Marc Swetlitz points out, "was a consistent advocate of greater control over the future of human heredity through eugenic measures".[53] For example, Julian predicts that by using "a few highly endowed males" to produce a whole new generation, or developing the technology anticipated by J.B.S. Haldane in "Daedalus" that would allow "selected germinal tissue-cultures" to be used for reproduction (as in *Brave New World*), "all kinds of new possibilities would emerge", such as a new caste "endowed with altruistic and communal impulses".[54] This focus on positive eugenics can be seen in Aldous' novel *Island*. Kripal seizes on Julian's suggestion that ESP

50 Huxley, "Science Turns to the Supernatural", *CE* 3: 175–176.

51 See ibid., 177. Huxley's attitude towards the *siddhis* was common at the time – see for instance Geraldine Coster, *Yoga and Western Psychology: A Comparison* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1968), 227 – when in fact a large part of book three of the *Yoga Sutras* is devoted to the acquisition of the *siddhis*. See Urban, *Tantra*, 220.

52 Kripal, *Mutants and Mystics*, 186.

53 Marc Swetlitz, "Julian Huxley and the End of Evolution", *Journal of the History of Biology* 28, no. 2 (1995): 185.

54 Julian Huxley, *Evolution: The Modern Synthesis* (Bombay: Macmillan, 1955), 573.

"might be developed" and as "commonly distributed" as "musical or mathematical gifts are today",[55] but again Julian is referring to positive eugenics, whereby people with ESP faculties would be encouraged to reproduce in the hope that their progeny would also be endowed with ESP, or, in a Daedalus-like future, ESP genes might be stirred into the new human mix. Julian also advocated the cultivation of humanity's "mental possibilities" by "developing special talents, by acquiring knowledge and skills of various kinds".[56] The goal is the attainment of a "well-developed, well-integrated personality", which he rather confusingly defines as the "highest product of evolution",[57] when what he really means is something like culture or civilisation, since speaking several languages, say, or becoming an accomplished artist or musician has no bearing on the evolution of *Homo sapiens*. Indeed, Julian's "mental possibilities" sound a lot like his brother's human potentialities: "What can be done to bring out the latent capacities of the ordinary man and woman for understanding and enjoyment", writes Julian in the essay "Transhumanism",

> to teach people the techniques of achieving spiritual experience (after all, one can acquire the technique of dancing or tennis, so why not of mystical ecstasy or spiritual peace?); to develop native talent and intelligence in the growing child, instead of frustrating or distorting them? Already we know that painting and thinking, music and mathematics, acting and science can come to mean something very real to quite ordinary, average boys and girls – provided only that the right methods are adopted for bringing out the children's possibilities. We are beginning to realize that even the most fortunate people are living far below capacity, and that most human beings develop not more than a small fraction of their potential mental and spiritual efficiency.[58]

But this is a far cry from the evolutionary mysticism of Murphy, who envisaged Esalen as an "academy" where *paranormal* human potentialities could be developed through "transformative practices and a stable institutional structure".[59]

It seems, then, that Murphy grafted his own convictions regarding evolutionary mysticism onto Aldous Huxley's conception of the human potentialities.

55 Julian Huxley quoted in Kripal, *Mutants and Mystics*, 186.
56 Julian Huxley, *New Bottles for New Wine* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1957), 14.
57 Ibid.
58 Ibid., 15.
59 Kripal, *Mutants and Mystics*, 182.

When the Esalen Institute first opened its doors in September 1962, its catalogue was entitled "Human Potentialities".[60] The Human Potential Movement (HPM) came a few years later in 1965 and was the brainchild of Murphy and the writer and educator George Leonard. They hoped that the HPM would combine the political activism of the civil rights movement with an attempt to realise Huxley's human potentialities, which for both Murphy and Leonard included supernormal powers whose emergence was guided by evolution.[61]

As it turned out, many of the therapies pursued at Esalen under the aegis of the HPM did in fact dovetail with Huxley's human potentialities. Huxley's emphasis on the need for integration between body and mind in order to facilitate education, not to mention well-being, spiritual fulfilment and so on, was a fundamental tenet of most of the body therapies offered at Esalen, including the Alexander technique and Rolfing. Frederick (or Fritz) Perls joined the residential staff at Esalen and practised Gestalt therapy in groups, though as Olav Hammer points out his sceptical attitude to alternative spirituality as being a refuge from personal responsibility was out of kilter with the Esalen worldview.[62] The transpersonal psychologists Abraham Maslow and Stanislav Grof, who emphasised the psychological nature of religion, better exemplified the Esalen outlook. Indeed, Huxley's human potentialities came to be associated with Maslow's notion of "self-actualisation". The latter was achieved by creative, gifted individuals who had successfully realised their human potentialities and as a result were prone to "peak experiences", transports of happiness, awareness and metaphysical meaning, which Maslow described in "overtly religionist terms", maintaining that mystical experience was the superlative form of the peak experience.[63] Maslow felt that organised religion was too "authoritarian" for Western democracies and advocated an alternative personal spirituality that was very much in keeping with the Esalen goal of forging a mystical "religion of no religion".[64] Kripal notes the importance of Huxley's *The Perennial Philosophy* in this respect and asserts that in the 1960s "it was still

60 See Murphy, "Totally on Fire".

61 See Kripal, *Esalen*, 207–208, 213.

62 See Olav Hammer, "Human Potential Movement", in *Dictionary of Gnosis and Western Esotericism*, 575.

63 Ibid., 573–574. See also Kripal, *Esalen* 135, 148–149.

64 See Kripal, *Esalen*, 8, 135, 150. This phrase was coined by Frederic Spiegelberg, the professor of comparative religion at Stanford University who switched Murphy on to Eastern philosophy and religion after he'd lost his Episcopalian faith in the wake of being exposed to evolutionary theory at college. See ibid., 56–57.

a radical and deeply subversive thing to assert the deep unity of the world's religions".[65]

Huxley's belief that psychedelic drugs could catalyse mystical experience also influenced Esalen and the HPM. In the first Esalen brochure, one of the three main strands for investigation was "work with 'mind-opening' drugs"; the reading list for the first seminar comprised Huxley, R.C. Zaehner and Alan Watts;[66] and the fourth seminar at Esalen was devoted to "drug-induced mysticism", which proved to be a popular topic.[67] But the escalating use of psychedelic substances at Esalen, which reached a peak in the years 1966–70, which Murphy characterises as a "tumultuous, out-of-control time", caused Murphy and Price to modify their attitude to mescaline and LSD, and while they continued to value them for their ability to facilitate altered states of consciousness, they concluded that, as Kripal puts it, "their social and personal side effects rendered them dubious at best as long-standing transformative practices".[68] They also worried that the illegality of these substances might lead to the closure of Esalen and proscribed drugs from being used in seminars or sold on the grounds.[69] I shall examine Huxley's legacy with respect to psychedelic substances more fully in the next section.

Esalen was one of the principal American hubs for what Kripal terms the "Tantric transmission" in the West, and in this respect Huxley was also in the vanguard.[70] Kripal quotes from *The Making of a Counter Culture* (1969) by Theodore Roszak, who notes the paradigm shift from the neo-Advaita of the interwar years, which was "severely contemplative in the most ascetic sense of the term", with the typical swami of the Vedanta Society being a "kindly orientalised version of an Irish Jesuit priest", to the life-affirming traditions of Zen, Taoism and Tantra from the 1950s onwards, which valorised the erotic over the ascetic.[71] "In this", writes Kripal, Roszak

> simply expressed sociologically in 1969 what Huxley had earlier imagined as Pala in 1962, that forbidden island where the erotic pleasures of *maithuna* and the mystical revelations of the *moksha*-medicine made

65 Ibid., 87.

66 Only the authors' names are listed but I assume they were reading *The Doors of Perception* (1954) and probably *Heaven and Hell* (1956), *Mysticism, Sacred and Profane* (1957) and *The Joyous Cosmology* (1962) respectively.

67 Kripal, *Esalen*, 117–118.

68 Ibid., 132.

69 Ibid., 133–134.

70 Ibid., 20.

71 Roszak quoted in ibid., 108–109.

> life reasonably happy and more or less peaceful, in striking contrast to – that is, *against* (counter-) – the arrogant militarism, dogmatic beliefs, and repressed pruderies of Nation, God, and True Religion.[72]

The French author Michel Houellebecq makes some characteristically bold claims about Huxley's influence on Esalen and the New Age movement. He holds Huxley partly responsible for the sexual revolution of the late 1960s that he deplores. The narrator of his first novel, *Extension du domaine de la lutte* (1994), translated as *Whatever* in English, argues that the "[s]exual liberalism" that emerged from the counterculture is "an extension of the domain of the struggle [...] to all ages and all classes of society", with the result that "certain people have a varied and exciting erotic life" while "others are reduced to masturbation and solitude".[73] In his next novel, *Atomised* (1998), the mother of the chief characters Bruno and Michel becomes involved with the Italian-American Francesco di Meola, whom Houellebecq represents as "one of the founding members of the Esalen commune", and she abandons both her sons to emigrate to America.[74] Di Meola is "involved in the music business" and senses a "new movement" in the California of the early 1960s "calling for the sweeping away of Western civilisation in its entirety".[75] He meets Aldous Huxley, "the spiritual father of the movement", and this leaves a "profound impression on di Meola". Houellebecq's narrator is a bit sketchy on the details but says that di Meola has a villa at Big Sur that attracts the "luminaries" of the counterculture, such as Alan Watts, Abraham Maslow, Carlos Castaneda *et al.*, and represents Esalen as a sprawling commune where people "practised sexual liberation and the use of mind-expanding drugs".[76] But where the actual founders of Esalen, Michael Murphy and Richard Price, were earnest spiritual seekers, di Meola is a creep who uses drugs and ersatz spirituality to lure naïve young women into his bed.

In a key scene in the novel, Bruno and Michel discuss Huxley's impact on the culture. Bruno, a sexually frustrated teacher who suffers a mental breakdown after trying to seduce one of his underage students, rubbishes the idea of *Brave New World* (1932) as a "totalitarian nightmare": the novel "is our idea of heaven: genetic manipulation, sexual liberation, the war against age, the leisured society. This is precisely the world we have tried – and so far failed – to

72 Ibid., 109.
73 Michel Houellebecq, *Whatever*, trans. Paul Hammond (London: Serpent's Tail, 1999), 99.
74 Michel Houellebecq, *Atomised*, trans. Frank Wynne (London: Heinemann, 2000), 31.
75 Ibid., 93–94.
76 Ibid., 31, 94.

create".[77] His half-brother Michel, a reclusive molecular biologist, claims that Huxley derived all his ideas for *Brave New World*, such as "genetic manipulation and 'improving the species'", from Julian Huxley's book *What Dare I Think?* (1931), when in fact Aldous got the idea of "genetic manipulation" from Haldane, and kept abreast of scientific literature and thus did not need to rely on Julian for his ideas regarding eugenics.[78] Michel says that "the founding fathers of Esalen" were "very influenced by [Huxley's] ideas", and claims that the New Age movement "recycled all the ideas of Esalen", with the result that "Aldous Huxley is probably one of the most influential thinkers of the century".[79] He points to *Island*, in which "sensuality and sexuality are freely practised" by the Palanese, as having had a "big influence on hippies and through them on New Agers".[80] Michel avers that the societies of the World State and Pala have "a lot in common" but Huxley was "senile by that time" and did not notice it.[81] In both *Brave New World* and *Island* desire, which leads to "suffering, pain and hatred", is mollified by "satisfying it immediately".[82] Michel approvingly notes that in *Brave New World* economic and sexual competition has become obsolete due to the totalitarian control of the economy and of reproduction, but argues that Huxley overlooks the frantic need for self-assertion created by the awareness of death, so that even in the World State "lust and greed" would "still exist – not as pleasure principles, but as forms of egotism".[83] Nonetheless, both Michel and his creator seem to have been inspired by Huxley's idea of a "society where the link between sex and procreation has been broken".[84] Michel's work on cloning helps to bring about a post-human species in the future, who have no gender and reproduce asexually, rendering them effectively immortal. Hubczejak, the man who champions Michel's work and helps to orchestrate the "metaphysical mutation" that results in this new post-human species, co-opts "New Age thinking" to win support for his programme, recognising that the New Age movement was "based on the notion that a society cannot function without the guiding hand of religion; it was, in effect, a call to arms, a search for a new paradigm".[85] It is no coincidence, then, that Hubczejak calls his movement the Movement for Human Potential.

77 Ibid., 187.
78 Ibid., 189.
79 Ibid., 190.
80 Ibid.
81 Ibid.
82 Ibid., 191.
83 Ibid.
84 Ibid.
85 Ibid., 373.

While Houellebecq fails to appreciate the spiritual dimension of *maithuna* and misconstrues Pala as a hedonistic Shangri-La of sex and psychedelic drugs, he is surely right in emphasising Huxley's influence on Esalen and the New Age movement.

Psychedelic Drugs and Spiritual Experience

If Huxley was not the only thinker of the twentieth century to claim that psychedelic drugs, such as mescaline, LSD and psilocybin mushrooms, gave rise to mystical experience, he was probably the most influential one. In what follows, I situate Huxley's work on psychedelic drugs by briefly considering some of his more notable precursors, such as P.D. Ouspensky and Aleister Crowley. I then assess the impact of Huxley's mystical reading of the psychedelic experience on researchers such as Humphry Osmond and Albert Hofmann. Finally, I consider Huxley's influence on psychedelic storm-troopers such as Timothy Leary, Bruce Eisner and Terence McKenna.

William James famously argued that the altered state of consciousness he experienced after inhaling nitrous oxide was akin to the episodes of mystical union reported by saints and sages.[86] Following in James' footsteps, P.D. Ouspensky conducted a number of experiments with drugs in order to obtain greater insight into magic and mysticism.[87] In *A New Model of the Universe* (1931), he notes the intimate link between psychedelic drugs and religion. He suggests that *soma* and the sacred potion taken in the Eleusinian Mysteries may have contained a psychoactive ingredient. Likewise, the flying ointment used in witchcraft was prepared from "plants possessing stimulant, intoxicant and narcotic properties"; sorcery was associated with the use of belladonna, datura and hashish; and in Siberia shamans used the fly agaric mushroom in order to prophesy.[88] Frustratingly, Ouspensky did not disclose which drugs he took on the grounds that the methods were irrelevant. The general consensus is that he used nitrous oxide and cannabis,[89] but Robert de Ropp, who worked closely with Ouspensky and his wife in the 1930s, maintains that it was "mainly

86 See James, *Varieties of Religious Experience*, 378.

87 See P.D. Ouspensky, *A New Model of the Universe: Principles of the Psychological Method in Its Application to Problems of Science, Religion and Art* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1960), 308.

88 See ibid., 318–319.

89 See for instance Lachman, *In Search of P.D. Ouspensky*, 51 and Webb, *Harmonious Circle*, 112.

opium".[90] This makes sense, as in some respects his experiences were quite different from those of Huxley. For example, Ouspensky observes that there was a "transitional state" in which he heard voices, which he compared to the voices of spirits heard by mediums. He could ask these voices questions but gradually perceived that they never supplied him with answers of which he or his unconscious was ignorant. Their answers were akin, Ouspensky asserted, to the alleged clairvoyance of Charles Leadbeater and Rudolph Steiner, and the information they gleaned from the "akashic records".[91] On the other hand, in a chapter entitled "Experimental Mysticism", Ouspensky reports the effacement of his ego and a sensation of oneness and unity that is ultimately joyful, for he perceives that all one's problems redound from the illusion of a separate self, and this seems more akin to Huxley's experiences with mescaline and LSD. As noted in Chapter 1, Huxley did attend some of Ouspensky's lectures and visited Lyne Place, but there's no textual evidence to suggest that he had read *A New Model of the Universe*.

The occultist Aleister Crowley made many experiments with psychedelic drugs, in particular peyote and hashish, in an attempt to induce, among other things, mystical experience. Christopher Partridge notes that Crowley was influenced by the work of William James on nitrous oxide and in an anonymous article published in 1922 he confides that he has been engaged in "studying the effects of various drugs upon the human organism, with special reference to the parallelisms between psychical phenomena of drug-neuroses, insanities, and mystical illuminations".[92] At one stage, he intended to produce "an elaborate study of the psychological effects produced by *Anhalonium lewinii* (mescal buttons), compiled from the actual records of some hundreds of experiments", but, in the unlikely event that he wrote it, he never published it.[93] Crowley also threw a number of psychedelic parties, in the course of which he introduced famous writers to peyote, such as Katherine Mansfield and Theodore Dreiser.[94] According to James Webb, it was Crowley who first introduced Huxley to mescaline, in the form of peyote, in "pre-1933 Berlin".[95] Webb's source is "a former disciple of Crowley", and this rumour has been repeated as fact ever since by Crowley scholars and aficionados. It is true that Huxley, in the company of

90 Robert S. de Ropp, *The Master Game: Beyond the Drug Experience* (Nevada City: Gateways Books, 2002), 41.

91 Ouspensky, *New Model of the Universe*, 334, 340–341.

92 Crowley quoted in Christopher Partridge, "Aleister Crowley on Drugs", *International Journal for the Study of New Religions* 7, no. 2 (2016): 127.

93 Ibid., 137.

94 See ibid., 138.

95 James Webb, *The Occult Establishment* (Glasgow: Richard Drew Publishing, 1981), 439n39.

J.W.N. Sullivan visited Crowley in Berlin in October 1930, and during the course of the visit Crowley may have mentioned his peyote experiments.[96] But if indeed Crowley had given Huxley peyote, it seems odd that in the two volumes of Huxley's correspondence edited by Grover Smith and James Sexton respectively he does not mention Crowley once, much less report on the effects of the drug to his confidants.[97] In a recently published letter to Humphry Osmond from January 1960, Huxley writes that the "Crowley lead" might be fruitful, presumably in relation to peyote (in Osmond's previous letter he offers to send Huxley an account of the peyote ceremony he participated in some years ago in Saskatchewan); Huxley suggests that if "that horrible man" (i.e. Crowley) has written a memoir it might contain useful information about his drug experiments, whereas if Huxley had taken peyote with Crowley he would undoubtedly have shared the experience with Osmond.[98] Furthermore, in a letter to the psychiatrist John Smythies from March 1953, Huxley explicitly states that "I have not as yet used the drug myself; but hope to be able to do so as soon as we can get hold of a supplier of purified mescaline. I could, of course, use the raw peyote plant, which is easily available; but rather dread the nausea which goes with its ingestion".[99] In addition, Huxley's nephew Siggy Wessberg affirms that Huxley first took mescaline with Osmond in May 1953.[100] And in *The Doors of Perception* (1954), Huxley notes that before taking mescaline in 1953 he had known "contemplation only in its humbler, its more ordinary forms", such as "rapt absorption in poetry or painting".[101]

In the essay "A Treatise on Drugs" (1931), Huxley remarks on the connection between drugs and religion:

> The Persians and, before them, the Greeks and probably the ancient Hindus used alcohol to produce religious ecstasy; the Mexicans procured

96 See Churton, *Aleister Crowley*, 171–172.

97 There is a letter and two postcards from Huxley to Crowley, but these do not appear in either the Grover Smith or James Sexton collections.

98 Cynthia Carson Bisbee, *et al.*, eds., *Psychedelic Prophets*, 438.

99 Aldous Huxley letter quoted in J.R. Smythies, "The Impact of Psychedelic Drugs on Philosophy and Psychical Research", *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research* 52, no. 795 (1983): 196–197.

100 See David King Dunaway, *Aldous Huxley Recollected: An Oral History* (New York: Carroll & Graf, 1995), 93–94 and Partridge, "Aleister Crowley", 144.

101 Huxley, *Doors*, in *CE* 5: 172. For other refutations of the rumour that Crowley gave Huxley peyote, see Partridge, "Aleister Crowley", 143–144; Aldous Huxley, *Moksha: Writings on Psychedelics and the Visionary Experience (1931–1963)*, ed. Michael Horowitz and Cynthia Palmer (New York: Stonehill Publishing, 1977), 3; and Deery, *Mysticism of Science*, 191n18.

> the beatific vision by eating a poisonous cactus; a toadstool filled the shamans of Siberia with enthusiasm and endowed them with the gift of tongues.[102]

The essay was inspired by his reading of *Phantastica* (1924; English translation 1931) by Louis Lewin, a German pharmacologist, after whom peyote was designated *Anhalonium lewinii*. Lewin had first encountered peyote in 1886 and produced a report of its psychoactive effects two years later.[103] In 1896, Lewin's colleague Arthur Heffter succeeded in isolating mescaline from the cactus and it was first synthesised by Ernst Späth in 1919.[104] In his section on mescaline in *Phantastica*, Lewin writes that peyote was venerated as a god by the Mexicans and Native Americans who used it as a sacrament.[105] His description of the visionary effects of mescaline below doubtless whetted Huxley's interest in the drug:

> Quite ordinary objects appear as marvels. In comparison with the material world which now manifests itself, the ordinary world of everyday life seems pale and dead. Colour-symphonies are perceived. The colours gleam with a delicacy and variety which no human being could possibly produce. The objects bathed in such brilliant colours move and change their tints so rapidly that the consciousness is hardly able to follow. Then after a short time coloured arabesques and figures appear in endless play [...] charming in their variety.[106]

Indeed, Huxley praises Lewin's work on peyote in the first sentence of *The Doors of Perception*. He also mentions the mescaline experiments of Havelock Ellis and Weir Mitchell, who both reported similar episodes of visionary experience, though it is unclear when Huxley read these.[107]

Huxley's sudden interest in mescaline in 1953 seems to have been provoked by the work of the psychiatrists Humphry Osmond and John Smythies.

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102 Aldous Huxley, "A Treatise on Drugs", in *CE* 3: 304.

103 See Louis Lewin, *Phantastica: Narcotic and Stimulating Drugs, Their Use and Abuse*, trans. P.H.A. Wirth (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1964), 97 and Partridge, "Aleister Crowley", 137.

104 See Partridge, "Aleister Crowley", 137 and Albert Hofmann, *LSD: My Problem Child* and *Insights/Outlooks*, trans. Jonathan Ott (Oxford: Beckley Foundation Press, 2013), 38.

105 See Lewin, *Phantastica*, 98–99.

106 Ibid., 102.

107 See Havelock Ellis, "Mescal: A New Artificial Paradise", *Contemporary Review* 73 (Jan. 1898); idem, "Mescal: A Study of a Divine Plant", *Popular Science Monthly* (May 1902); and Weir Mitchell, "Remarks on the Effects of Anhalonium Lewinii (The Mescal Button)", *British Medical Journal* (Dec. 5, 1896).

Contrary to Osmond's account in *Moksha* (1977), which suggests that Huxley approached him and Smythies, the latter wrote to Huxley around November 1952, enclosing his article "The Extension of Mind", which argued that the existence of psi phenomena challenged the narrow materialist conception of consciousness as a by-product of the brain.[108] Huxley wrote to Smythies on November 25, 1952, with some thoughts on his article.[109] Smythies replied and sent Huxley a copy of the article "The Present State of Psychological Medicine" by Osmond and himself, which appeared in the *Hibbert Journal* for January 1953.[110] In Huxley's letter to Smythies on March 1, 1953 (quoted above), he says he has instructed his publisher to send Smythies a copy of *The Devils of Loudun* (1952).[111] He then asks for a "reprint of your paper on mescaline and schizophrenia", which could be referring either to "The Mescaline Phenomenon" by Smythies or "Schizophrenia: A New Approach" by Smythies and Osmond.[112] This chronology makes sense as when Huxley writes to Osmond for the first time on April 10, 1953, he thanks him for his letter and the "accompanying article" and for his kind remarks concerning *Devils of Loudun* (which Huxley had sent to Smythies).[113] At this time, Smythies and Osmond were chiefly interested in mescaline as a psychotomimetic or mimicker of psychosis. In "Schizophrenia: A New Approach", they note that for "over fifty years" it has been known that mescaline "produces symptoms almost identical with schizophrenia", and it has thus been taken by psychiatrists who desire to experience schizophrenic symptoms.[114] There is no mention of the spiritual potentialities of the drug.

In an earlier article, "On Being Mad" (1952), Osmond relates his first experience with mescaline, supervised by Smythies. While out walking in the London streets, he is dogged by feelings of persecution and paranoia:

> One house took my attention. It had a sinister quality, since from behind its drawn shades, people seemed to be looking out, and their gaze was unfriendly. We met no people for the first few hundred yards, then we came to a window in which a child was standing, and as we drew nearer,

108 See John Smythies, "The Extension of Mind: A New Theoretical Basis for Psi Phenomena", *Journal for the Society of Psychical Research* 36, no. 666 (1951): 477–502.

109 See Symons, *Aldous Huxley's Hands*, 79.

110 See Smythies, "The Impact of Psychedelic Drugs", 194.

111 See ibid., 196–197.

112 Ibid. See J.R. Smythies, "The Mescaline Phenomenon", *The British Journal for the Philosophy of Science* 3, no. 12 (1953): 339–347; Humphry Osmond and John Smythies, "Schizophrenia: A New Approach", *Journal of Mental Science* 98, no. 411 (1952): 309–315.

113 See Smith, *Letters*, 668.

114 Osmond and Smythies, "Schizophrenia: A New Approach", 311.

> its face became piglike. I noticed two passers-by who, as they drew nearer, seemed humpbacked and twisted, and their faces were covered with wens. The wide spaces of the streets were dangerous, the houses threatening, and the sun burned me.[115]

At other times, when he closed his eyes, he had the sort of visionary experience reported by Lewin above: "showers of jewels flashed across this inner vision, great landscapes of color spread out before me, and almost any thought would be accompanied by a vision which was often supernaturally beautiful".[116] But Osmond's "set", a term used by psychedelic researchers to denote the subject's beliefs and expectations, was that mescaline would mimic the symptoms of schizophrenia and so his experience largely reflected this.

Huxley's set, prior to taking mescaline, was quite different from that of Osmond, for not only had he read about the visionary experiences of Lewin, Havelock Ellis *et al.*, he had been studying mysticism for almost twenty years and was thus primed for the extrovertive experience he reports in *The Doors of Perception*. In his first letter to Osmond on April 10, 1953, a month *before* he took mescaline, Huxley writes:

> It looks as though the most satisfactory working hypothesis about the human mind must follow, to some extent, the Bergsonian model, in which the brain with its associated normal self, acts as a utilitarian device for limiting, and making selections from, the enormous possible world of consciousness, and for canalizing experience into biologically profitable channels. Disease, mescaline, emotional shock, aesthetic experience and mystical enlightenment have the power, each in its different way and in varying degrees, to inhibit the functions of the normal self and its ordinary brain activity, thus permitting the "other world" to rise into consciousness.[117]

This is Bergson's filter theory of consciousness that Huxley expounds in *Doors of Perception*, and which appears in that book to be valorised by his mescaline experience, as if, after the fact, Bergson's theory had struck him as providing the best model for the experience. As noted above, Huxley was well aware of

115 Humphry Osmond, "Mescaline: On Being Mad", in *Psychedelics: The Uses and Implications of Hallucinogenic Drugs*, ed. Bernard Aaronson and Humphry Osmond (Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, 1970), 26.

116 Ibid., 25.

117 Smith, *Letters*, 668.

the visionary effects of mescaline and in the same letter he predicts that in the future mescaline may play a role in the education of young people, enabling them to "taste and see" the visionary worlds that they have experienced vicariously in the works of poets, mystics and painters.[118] For hard contextualists, Huxley's set (his cultural and spiritual expectations) effectively constructs his experience, whereas Huxley argued that mescaline was a catalyst that allowed his mind to apprehend a greater swathe of Mind at Large, revealing the pristine reality behind the artificial constructs of language and culture.

Regarding Huxley's set, it should also be noted that Huxley had read the work of Osmond and Smythies that presented mescaline as a psychotomimetic, and during his first mescaline trip, while gazing at a canvas chair in his garden, he gets an insight into the panic and terror experienced by the schizophrenic:

> Confronted by a chair which looked like the Last Judgment [...] I found myself all at once on the brink of panic. This, I suddenly felt, was going too far. [...] The fear, as I analyse it in retrospect, was of being overwhelmed, of disintegrating under a pressure of reality greater than a mind, accustomed to living most of the time in a cozy world of symbols, could possibly bear.[119]

But this ontological terror is explained in terms of religion rather than of pathology. The mystics William Law and Jacob Boehme, he notes, reported that the "divine Light can only be apprehended" by ordinary human beings as a "burning, purgatorial fire".[120] Likewise, in *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*, souls in the bardo state shrink away in fear from the Pure Light of the Void and would prefer to be reborn as beasts or ghosts rather than endure the "burning brightness of unmitigated Reality".[121] But where the mescaline taker, when overwhelmed with the terrifying intensity of the experience, can reassure himself that the effects of the drug are only temporary, the schizophrenic is

> unable to shut off the experience of a reality which he is not holy enough to live with, which he cannot explain away because it is the most stubborn of primary facts, and which, because it never permits him to look at the world with merely human eyes, scares him into interpreting its unremitting strangeness, its burning intensity of significance, as the

118 See ibid., 669.
119 Huxley, *Doors*, in *CE* 5: 179.
120 Ibid.
121 Ibid., 179–180.

> manifestations of human or even cosmic malevolence, calling for the most desperate countermeasures, from murderous violence at one end of the scale to catatonia, or psychological suicide, at the other.[122]

In other words, the world of the schizophrenic was akin to an unbounded bad trip, whereas given the correct set and "setting" (a conducive environment), mescaline could provide a deeply spiritual experience. Gazing spellbound at the transfigured flowers in his study, Huxley reflects: "The Beatific Vision, *Sat Chit Ananda,* Being-Awareness-Bliss – for the first time I understood, not on the verbal level, not by inchoate hints or at a distance, but precisely and completely what those prodigious syllables referred to".[123]

Huxley's mystical interpretation of the mescaline experience evidently influenced Osmond, for three years after meeting Huxley in 1953, Osmond had coined the word "psychedelic" (meaning mind-manifesting), in order to connote the spiritual dimensions of mescaline, LSD and psilocybin.[124] In an article the following year (1957), Osmond argued that the term psychotomimetic should be abandoned since it overlooked the "social, philosophical, and religious implications" of these drugs that he believed were more important than their clinical use to simulate psychosis.[125] He describes his experiences with the drug as being "the most strange, most awesome, and among the most beautiful things" he has encountered, and adds that psychedelic substances provide "not escapes from but enlargements, burgeonings of reality".[126] In the epilogue, he betrays Huxley's influence when he suggests that humans can be defined in spiritual as well as material terms, as "a manifestation of Brahma [*sic*] in Atman, an aspect of an infinite God imminent [*sic*] and transcendent within and without us", and borrows a quote from the mystic Thomas Traherne that Huxley uses in *The Doors of Perception* to convey the way in which mescaline restores the perceptual purity of childhood, before the world was pushed into the procrustean constructions of language and culture: "to unlearn the dirty devices of the world and become as it were a little child again".[127] Moreover, Steven Novak reports that in a letter from Osmond he admitted that "his

122 Ibid., 180.
123 Ibid., 161–162.
124 See Smith, *Letters*, 795.
125 Humphry Osmond, "A Review of the Clinical Effects of Psychotomimetic Agents", in *LSD: The Consciousness-Expanding Drug*, 135.
126 Ibid., 146.
127 Ibid., 148–149. See also Huxley, *Doors*, in *CE* 5: 173.

attitude toward the use of mescaline changed after observing Huxley's drug taking, reading *The Doors of Perception*, and talking with Huxley".[128]

Novak also claims that Huxley "converted" Albert Hofmann (the first person to synthesise LSD in 1938) to the "idea that taking LSD provided a transcendental experience",[129] and cites as evidence Hofmann's statement in *LSD: My Problem Child* (1979) that he "found a meaningful exposition of the experience induced by hallucinogenic drugs" in *Doors of Perception* and *Heaven and Hell* (1956), and "thereby gained a deepened insight into [his] own LSD experiments".[130] On the other hand, prior to reading Huxley, Hofmann reports taking LSD with the German author Ernst Jünger in 1951, to "observe the effects of LSD on the artistic person", and affirms that they both reached the threshold of an "experience of mystical being", but were held back by the low dose they had taken.[131] Moreover, Hofmann did not think of LSD as solely a psychotomimetic, for when it was launched by Sandoz Laboratories as Delysid in 1947 as a freely available research drug, one of the indications was in "[a]nalytical psychotherapy, to elicit release of repressed material and provide mental relaxation, particularly in anxiety states and obsessional neuroses".[132] This therapeutic aspect was investigated by psychiatrists and psychologists, and in the 1950s there emerged two schools of therapy that made use of psychedelic drugs: "psycholytic therapy" that involved low dosages of LSD in conjunction with ongoing psychotherapy; and "psychedelic therapy", pioneered by Osmond and Abram Hoffer (a fellow psychiatrist at Saskatchewan Hospital in Canada), which involved a single large dose of LSD and a guided trip that made use of a conducive setting, such as music, paintings by Van Gogh, tactile stimuli and so on, and achieved good results with alcoholics.[133] The aim of psychedelic therapy, Hofmann notes, was to "induce a mystical-religious experience through the shock effects of LSD", which acted "as a starting point for a restructuring and curing of the patient's personality in the accompanying psychotherapeutic treatment".[134]

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128 Steven J. Novak, "LSD Before Leary: Sidney Cohen's Critique of 1950s Psychedelic Drug Research", *Isis* 88, no. 1 (1997): 94n24.

129 Ibid., 94.

130 Hofmann, *LSD*, 127–128.

131 Ibid., 114–115.

132 Ibid., 41–42.

133 See Stevens, *Storming Heaven*, 71 and Abram Hoffer, "Treatment of Alcoholism with Psychedelic Therapy", in *Psychedelics,* 360–361. Hoffer reports that fifty percent of the alcoholics they treated never drank again.

134 Hofmann, *LSD*, 41.

Both types of therapy were influenced by Huxley's mystical reading of the psychedelic experience. As noted above, Huxley was instrumental in reorienting Osmond's view of mescaline and LSD from psychotomimetic to psychedelic, and this directly affected Osmond's work with alcoholics, which had begun with the idea that mescaline could mimic delirium tremens, which was a devastating experience that often led alcoholics to quit drinking and thus mescaline could be given to alcoholics as a spur to sobriety.[135] Huxley also had an impact on psycholytic therapy. When the UCLA medical professor Sidney Cohen first took LSD in 1955, he was expecting a "model psychosis" and was thus surprised to experience instead a feeling of cosmic beneficence, a "heavenly inner quietude", a "contemplation of eternal truth".[136] Cohen's initial LSD research was disappointing, though, in that the test subjects reported feelings of "emptiness, loneliness, and isolation" rather than the more expansive spiritual experience Cohen had enjoyed.[137] Cohen knew Osmond and met with Huxley in late 1955, and, according to Novak, used Gerald Heard as a test subject; Novak quotes a letter from Heard in 1957, in which he says he was one of the "human guinea pigs" in LSD research, and describes his experience on LSD as being "so clearly similar to the accounts given by the mystics that none of us feels able to deny that this is in fact the experience that we undergo".[138] Cohen recruited the psychologist Betty Eisner to study the efficacy of LSD in psycholytic therapy, working on the assumption that the drug would give the subjects improved access to their unconscious, and they reported a 73 percent improvement in the test subjects.[139] Eisner had been a resident at Heard's Trabuco College and stated at the outset that the "best possible therapeutic LSD experience is one in which the subject glimpses the unity of the cosmos".[140]

But if at first Cohen had allowed himself to be swayed by Huxley and Heard and their extravagant hopes for LSD, which included boosting one's creativity and facilitating ESP, the scientist in him had serious reservations and he dissociated himself from Heard (with whom he had been co-authoring a book on LSD), and terminated his research with Eisner, hinting that her interest in Indian and Asian spirituality had biased her research.[141] Novak argues that LSD was a cultural barometer and notes that it was only on the west coast of America that test subjects were reporting transcendental experiences with psychedelic

135 See Hoffer, "Treatment of Alcoholism", 360.
136 The last two quotes are from Cohen in Novak, "LSD Before Leary", 92.
137 Ibid.
138 Ibid., 93.
139 Ibid., 95–96.
140 Eisner quoted in ibid., 96.
141 See ibid., 100–101.

drugs. It was felt that west-coast psychiatrists were "biased in favor of LSD" and, at the least, this affected their interpretation of the results of their studies, and, at worst, led to a "therapist-induced mystical experience similar to religious conversion".[142] As a result of Huxley and Heard's mystical interpretation of the psychedelic experience, "self-selected volunteers arrived primed to have a *Doors of Perception* experience", and these preconceptions invalidated some of the suspiciously positive results.[143]

Outside the fields of psychology and psychiatry, many were sceptical of Huxley's claims about the link between psychedelic drugs and mystical experience, such as Arthur Koestler and the philosopher Martin Buber.[144] Huxley's most outspoken critic was R.C. Zaehner, the Spalding Chair of Eastern Religions and Ethics at Oxford University. In his book *Mysticism, Sacred and Profane* (1957), written as a rebuttal to *The Doors of Perception*, Zaehner insists that Huxley's mescaline experiences are quite different from genuine mystical experiences, i.e. the "direct experience of God in His unutterable holiness" (or what Stace calls introvertive experience); however, he concedes that Huxley's mescaline experiences are akin to "natural mystical experience" (or extrovertive experience in Stace's typology), in other words the apprehension of a metaphysical aspect in nature accompanied by a sense of well-being or bliss and an identification with nature that elides a separate sense of self.[145] But for Zaehner, the transfiguration of the flowers in Huxley's study has nothing in common with the "Beatific Vision", which he defines as "a direct apperception of God, not through a glass, darkly, but face to face".[146] As a professed Catholic, Zaehner regards monism as heretical; the world is profane, created by God *ex nihilo* rather than *ex deo* and thus devoid of His divinity; thus the notion of experiencing mystical union with the godhead in the form of nature is a priori impossible. He quotes a passage from the Dominican Friar Henry Suso on mystical union, and notes that Suso's God is "felt and experienced as being something totally distinct and other than the objective world".[147] But in *The Doors of Perception*, Huxley explicitly states that his mescaline experiences did not result

142 Ibid., 99. The second quote is from the psychiatrist Jonathan O. Cole.

143 Ibid., 109–110.

144 See Martin Buber, *The Knowledge of Man*, ed. Maurice Friedman (New York: Harper & Row, 1955), 42–45, 99–102; Arthur Koestler, *The Ghost in the Machine* (London: Hutchinson, 1967), 335–336.

145 See R.C. Zaehner, *Mysticism, Sacred and Profane: An Inquiry into Some Varieties of Praeternatural Experience* (New York: Galaxy Book, 1961), xiii and Marshall, *Mystical Encounters*, 1.

146 Zaehner, *Mysticism*, 21.

147 Ibid., 22.

in "Enlightenment" or the "Beatific Vision";[148] rather, they were visionary experiences that gave him an insight into genuine mystical experience, such as "the Beatific Vision".[149] It was only after the book was written that he believed he had had full-blown mystical experiences through the use of psychedelic drugs.

Zaehner indulges in some highly dubious amateur psychology in order to explain Huxley's deluded (i.e. monistic) thinking. The urge for self-transcendence through religion, drugs, music and so on that Huxley identifies, is, for Zaehner, a symptom of his neurosis that Huxley is projecting onto "healthy-minded" people, for whom, Zaehner contends, life is "fun" rather than painful.[150] As a result of his neurotic misery, Huxley was attracted to Buddhism and Hinduism because these religions emphasise the connection between unhappiness and selfhood. Consequently, his mescaline experiences were conditioned by the doctrines of neo-Advaita and Mahayana Buddhism in which Huxley was immersed.[151] Zaehner invokes Jung, for whom nature mysticism represents the "longing, characteristic of psychologically immature persons", for the unity and tranquillity of the womb, prior to the establishment of subject-object relations in the outside world.[152] People who have nature mystical experiences, such as Huxley, with or without the help of psychedelic drugs, are making contact, Zaehner argues, not with God nor an impersonal godhead, but with Jung's collective unconscious, which he mistakenly conflates with Huxley's "Mind at Large".[153] One of Zaehner's chief objections to nature mystical experience is that this "psychic underworld" is amoral, beyond good and evil, and he makes much of Huxley's indifference while on mescaline to his fellow human beings.[154] But, as noted in Chapter 5, this indifference was characteristic of Huxley's visionary experiences on mescaline, whereas in his later full-blown mystical experiences he apprehended the godhead as "Love", and felt an intense identity and solidarity with humankind, since he realised that he and humankind were also manifestations of this cosmic Love.[155]

148 Huxley, *Doors*, in *CE* 5: 188.

149 See ibid., 161.

150 Zaehner, *Mysticism*, 16–17.

151 See ibid., 2–3, 17.

152 Ibid., 39.

153 See ibid., 44–45. For Huxley, there is a psychic continuum between the ego and Mind at Large with the personal and collective unconscious in between (see Huxley, *Devils*, 103–104 or Poller, "Beyond the Subliminal Mind", 257–258).

154 Zaehner, *Mysticism*, 45.

155 See also Huston Smith, "Do Drugs Have Religious Import?" *The Journal of Philosophy* 61, no. 18 (1964): 522–523; Kripal, *Roads of Excess, Palaces of Wisdom: Eroticism and Reflexivity in the Study of Mysticism* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2001), 156–198; Marshall, *Mystical Encounters*, 206–216 and Partridge, *High Culture*, 213–223 for a rebuttal of Zaehner's book.

Unlike Zaehner, the psychologist Timothy Leary was an eager convert to Huxley's Tantric reading of psychedelic experience. But Huxley's influence, as I shall show, was relatively short-lived, and Leary presently embarked on his own occult, "psi phy" path. Leary first took psilocybin mushrooms in Mexico in the summer of 1960 and was so galvanised by the experience that he set up the Psilocybin Project at Harvard University, where he was a professor of psychology, to study the effects of the drug.[156] One of his colleagues pressed on him copies of *The Doors of Perception* and *Heaven and Hell*, which made a great impression on Leary, who wrote to Huxley to apprise him of the Psilocybin Project.[157] Huxley was lecturing that autumn at MIT and visited Leary in Newton, Massachusetts, where they both took psilocybin.[158] Huxley recommended several books on Tantra by Sir John Woodroffe, Heinrich Zimmer and Mircea Eliade, among others.[159] At about the same time (spring 1962), Leary began visiting a Vedanta ashram in Boston, run by Fred Swain, who had taken psilocybin mushrooms the previous year and had sought out Leary at Newton.[160] Leary organised an LSD trip for the members of the ashram, mixing the drug with holy Ganges water and serving it in a chalice. Typically, Leary also participated in the ceremony and presently felt himself to be Śiva; a "beautiful Vedanta nun", aptly named Sakti, "crawled over and placed her head in [his] lap"; Leary informed her "we are all one"; and a statue of Ramakrishna "breathed and his eyes twinkled" in endorsement of Leary's words.[161] "I was a Hindu from that moment on", writes Leary. "No, that's not the way to say it. I recognized that day in the temple that we are all Hindus in our essence. We are all Hindu Gods and Goddesses".[162]

But where Huxley's experiments with mescaline and LSD led him to embrace a broadly Tantric worldview, Leary's interest in Hindu mythology and Tantric texts reinforced his psychedelic worldview: the "Hindu Bibles read like psychedelic manuals" and the "Hindu myths were session reports".[163] This approach is exemplified in *The Psychedelic Experience: A Manual Based on the Tibetan Book of the Dead* (1964), in which the authors (Leary co-wrote the text with his Harvard colleagues Ralph Metzner and Richard Alpert) interpret the three bardos of the Bardo Thödol as metaphors for the three stages of an acid

156 See Timothy Leary, *High Priest* (Berkeley: Ronin Publishing, 1995), 12, 15–16.
157 See Timothy Leary, *Flashbacks: An Autobiography* (London: Heinemann, 1983), 41.
158 See ibid., 43–44.
159 See Smith, *Letters*, 928–929. See also Kripal, *Esalen*, 128.
160 See Leary, *High Priest*, 296.
161 Ibid., 298.
162 Ibid.
163 Ibid., 297.

trip. At first, given that Tibetan Buddhism is part of the Tantric tradition,[164] the book would seem to be indebted to Huxley (indeed, Leary dedicated the first edition of the book to him), but a closer reading reveals an esoteric turn in Leary's thought. Leary boldly asserts that the true "esoteric" core of the Bardo Thödol contains instructions for "initiates" on how to die to one's ego while alive, and that the established idea that it is addressed to the newly dead to help them avoid rebirth and obtain liberation is an "exoteric façade".[165] Given these references to initiates and esoteric interpretations, it is hardly surprising to learn that the commentators on whom Leary relied for his own psychedelic reading of the text, namely W.Y. Evans-Wentz and Lama Anagarika Govinda, had Theosophical connections. The former joined the American Section of the Theosophical Society (TS) in 1901, and met Annie Besant while travelling through India. In Darjeeling in 1919, a Buddhist monk gave Evans-Wentz a manuscript copy of the Bardo Thödol, and he arranged to have it translated into English and eventually published it with his own lengthy introduction, in which he attempted to syncretise the text with "Yoga Philosophy" and *The Egyptian Book of the Dead*, and hinted that the Bardo Thödol was "preserved" by the Theosophical Masters of Tibet.[166]

As for Govinda, while he presented himself as a Buddhist, he also wrote for Theosophical journals.[167] Leary describes him as a "Tibetan commentator, freed from the European concepts of Jung" (who also wrote an introduction to the Bardo Thödol), consequently Govinda is able to perceive the "esoteric and practical meaning of the Tibetan book".[168] In fact, as Leary would discover some months later when he visited Govinda in India in 1965, he was a German bohemian named Ernst Hoffmann who could not read Tibetan.[169] It is from Govinda that Leary derives his claim that the Bardo Thödol is aimed at the living, and offers a "detailed account of how to lose the ego" and "how to make the consciousness-expansion experience endure in subsequent daily life".[170] What, in fact, Govinda seems to argue is that one should read the Bardo Thödol while alive, and attempt to "die" to one's ego and past, presumably through "yogic

164 See White, introduction to *Tantra in Practice*, 7.

165 Timothy Leary, Ralph Metzner and Richard Alpert, *The Psychedelic Experience: A Manual Based on the Tibetan Book of the Dead* (New York: University Books, 1971), 22.

166 See W.Y. Evans-Wentz, introduction to *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*, 2 and Donald S. Lopez, Jr, foreword to *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*, D.

167 See Donald S. Lopez, Jr, *Prisoners of Shangri-La: Tibetan Buddhism and the West* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 60.

168 Leary, Metzner and Alpert, *Psychedelic Experience*, 23.

169 See Robert Greenfield, *Timothy Leary: A Biography* (Orlando: Harvest Book, 2007), 228–229.

170 Leary, Metzner and Alpert, *Psychedelic Experience*, 22.

practices" such as meditation, as a means of perceiving the illusory nature of the self; that way, when one is actually dying, one will embrace the Clear Light of liberation rather than clinging to the chimera of self and being reborn.[171] But for Leary, the Tibetan descriptions of rebirth are nothing more than a "poetic statement of the genetic situation as currently described by biochemists and DNA researchers".[172] In other words, "rebirth" is reproduction.

On the surface, this might seem like Leary's attempt, as a psychologist, to push the Buddhist concept of rebirth into the procrustean bed of science; however, syncretising science with religion is a classic characteristic of occultism.[173] For instance, Blavatsky was insistent that the "occult science" of Theosophy was compatible with conventional science, as can be seen in the subtitles of her principal works: *Isis Unveiled: A Master-Key to the Mysteries of Ancient and Modern Science and Theology* and *The Secret Doctrine: The Synthesis of Science, Religion, and Philosophy*. A more recent example of this practice can be found in Jung:[174] in his introduction to the Bardo Thödol, he interprets karma in terms of "psychic heredity" and the collective unconscious.[175] Leary's new wrinkle was to claim that Eastern philosophy was entirely compatible with the new sciences of quantum physics, genetics and biochemistry. Admittedly, Huxley also attempted to reconcile mysticism and science (see below and Chapter 2), but his approach was far more grounded and responsible.

Leary quotes Govinda's description of the yogic techniques that enable one to access the "unrestricted treasury of subconscious memory", which contains the "records not only of our past lives but the records of the past of our race, the past of humanity, and of all pre-human forms of life".[176] Here Govinda is psychologising what sounds a lot like the "akashic records" of Theosophy.[177] For Leary, though, this information concerning the history of *Homo sapiens*

171 See Lama Anagarika Govinda, "Introductory Foreword" to *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*, lix–lx.

172 Ibid., 16.

173 For this point, see Marco Pasi, "Occultism", 1366.

174 As Hanegraaff notes, whether one considers Jung an occultist depends on whether you include spiritualism and psychical research in your definition of occultism, as Hanegraaff did in his book *New Age Religion and Western Culture: Esotericism in the Mirror of Secular Thought* (New York: E.J. Brill, 1996), 422–423, 500–501; according to Pasi's stricter definition, Jung would be excluded. See Hanegraaff, *Esotericism and the Academy*, 282n86.

175 C.G. Jung, "Psychological Commentary" to *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*, trans. R.F.C. Hull, xliii–iv.

176 Leary, Metzner and Alpert, *Psychedelic Experience*, 28.

177 According to Leadbeater, the akashic records comprise the master plan of the Logos (the head of the Neo-Theosophical occult hierarchy) and contain a record of everything that has happened in the universe as well as everything that will happen in the future. See C.W. Leadbeater, *Clairvoyance*, 100, 109.

lay not in the akashic records, nor in Jung's collective unconscious, but in our DNA. Indeed, this was the key to the "consciousness-expansion experience" that could be found in the "esoteric writings" of the Vedics, the Tantrics and the Eleusinian initiates:

> it is possible to cut beyond ego-consciousness, to tune in on neurological processes which flash by at the speed of light, and to become aware of the enormous treasury of ancient racial knowledge welded into the nucleus of every cell in your body.[178]

Henceforth, Leary's hostility to mainstream religion, his attempts to reconcile science and spirituality, as well as his references to alchemy, tarot and astrology, and to the work of Aleister Crowley and George Gurdjieff, makes him less a scientist or a psychologist than what Hanegraaff terms an "entheogenic esotericist".[179]

In his own mind, Leary clung to the idea of himself as a scientist but his grandiose psychedelic visions of human evolution were more akin to science fiction (in fact, Leary proposed the new categories of "science faction" and "psi phy" to describe his work).[180] He propounded a new "science" called "exo-psychology", which purported to examine humanity from an "extra-terrestrial" perspective in the future.[181] He portrayed conventional psychology as stuck in the old geocentric Newtonian paradigm, whereas exo-psychology was in harmony with the new sciences of neurology, ethology, neurochemistry and psychopharmacology, and represented the new cosmic Einsteinian paradigm. In light of these new sciences, Leary concludes that humans are little more, at the present evolutionary moment, than "biological robots", "pre-programmed" by their genes, and further forced into "tunnel realities" by "imprinting" models of behaviour from the environment.[182]

But while Leary presented exo-psychology as being based on the latest scientific advances, he was not averse to incorporating hoarier, less orthodox theories, such as recapitulation and panspermia. He declares that life was "seeded" on this planet by "amino acid templates" that contained the "genetic blueprints" for the "multi-billion year design of evolution".[183] Life unfolds in

178 Leary, Metzner and Alpert, *Psychedelic Experience*, 30.
179 For more on this category, see Hanegraaff, "Entheogenic Esotericism", 392–409.
180 See Timothy Leary, *Exo-Psychology* (Los Angeles: Starseed/Peace Press Publication, 1977), 7.
181 See ibid., 3.
182 Ibid., 2.
183 Ibid., 8.

"eight mutational phases": the first four "larval" circuits are concerned with life on earth, while the last four "extra-terrestrial" circuits are concerned with mankind's migration into the cosmos.[184] The latter circuits are currently blocked, Leary claims, by histones in the DNA, but these genes will be triggered by environmental cues in outer space, such as "exposure to zero-gravity and to extra-terrestrial radiation".[185] Leary argues that our DNA contains the genetic "blueprint" for *all* life on earth, not merely *Homo sapiens*, and adduces Ernst Haeckel's discredited recapitulation theory as evidence: "Each human being starts as a one-celled organism (at the point of conception) and recapitulates the earlier forms of evolution during the embryonic period".[186]

Just as Blavatsky attached an occult significance to the number seven,[187] so Leary, after propounding his eight circuits of "neural integration", decided that there was an occult connection between it and the eight notes of the music octave, the "eight" *cakras* of *kundalini yoga*,[188] the eight groups of the periodic table, the eight trigrams of the *I Ching*.[189] In addition to the eight circuits, there are 24 stages (3 × 8) of evolution, which is reflected in the twelve signs of the zodiac (12 × 2 = 24).[190] The tarot deck, Leary asserts, was the "work of advanced neurological adepts": the four tarot suits (wands, cups, swords, pentacles) represent the four amino acids of DNA and the four larval circuits; and somehow the 22 major arcana of the tarot deck are made to represent the 24 evolutionary stages.[191]

The LSD experience represents stage sixteen in Leary's scheme and thus the widespread use of psychedelic drugs in the late 1960s and early 70s was evidence of the evolution of the species. The next eight stages of evolution read like a Philip K. Dick novel, and involve telepathy or "brain-fusing"; our "post-human" existence will take place in "High Orbital Mini Earths" or "HOMES"; we will acquire conscious control of the brain and "DNA technology", leading to advanced genetic engineering, cloning and "self-actualization", the attainment of "atomic consciousness" and "meta-physiological intelligence", and finally at stage 24 "meta-physiological fusion in black holes".[192]

184 See ibid.
185 Ibid., 3.
186 Timothy Leary, *The Game of Life* (Los Angeles: Starseed/Peace Press Publication, 1979), 24.
187 There are seven evolutionary rounds, seven root races, seven principles of man, etc.
188 Although the number of *cakras* varies in different texts, the "classical hierarchy" comprises seven. See White, "Yoga, Brief History of an Idea", 14–15.
189 See Leary, *Game of Life*, 32–33, 49.
190 See ibid., 52.
191 See ibid., 40–43.
192 See ibid., 57–59.

Ultimately, for Leary, psychedelic drugs revealed the God within, in the form of DNA, rather than without.[193] Despite his early reliance on various forms of Hinduism and Buddhism to conceptualise the psychedelic experience, Leary was increasingly dismissive of normative religion. *In Starseed* (1973), he speaks of the "Hindu trap" and warns his readers: "It's anti-sexual. The guru, God, and the swami universe is a soft, sweet custard mush".[194] Leary the egotist was affronted by the "Undifferentiated unity" of Hinduism.[195] The "Oriental posture", he writes in *Your Brain is God* (1988), "is unbearably smug and certain"; the "best Indian gurus are wise tricksters"; the Hare Krishnas are "[p]impled losers who don't like their own looks and have no love of their own singularity".[196] After giving the etymology of religion (*"'re'* means back and *'ligare'* means to tie up"), Leary concludes: "All religions are straightjackets, jackets for the straight".[197] Leary's ideas (some derived from Huxley, some his own) also influenced the hippie movement of the 1960s and the New Age culture that grew out of it, which will be examined in the next section.

Bruce Eisner was a psychedelic activist and psychologist, who was inspired by both Leary and Huxley. He was part of the "Psychedelic Movement", which began as a "small intellectual elite" centred in Los Angeles, New York and London, and morphed into a "mass movement".[198] According to Eisner, the use of psychedelic drugs during the 1960s was intimately bound up with the social change that occurred in that period, such as desegregation, women's rights, environmental awareness and sexual liberation. These changes proved disturbing to the "Establishment" and led to the ban on LSD in 1966. While for many, LSD provided a "roller coaster ride through their unconscious", for Eisner and others it afforded a mystical experience.[199] He came to realise that the LSD experience was most beneficial to "self-actualized" individuals (in the Jungian sense of the word), and resulted in the "creation of new ideas or memes that led to the breakthroughs of the 1960s".[200] He praises Huxley for suggesting, in "Culture and the Individual" (1962), that psychedelic drugs should be used to liberate the mind from the conceptual sludge of a conservative culture jealous

193 See Partridge, *Re-Enchantment of the* West, 1: 101–102.
194 Timothy Leary, *Starseed* (San Francisco: Level Press, 1973), 6.
195 Ibid.
196 Timothy Leary, *Your Brain is God* (Berkeley: Ronin, 2001), 101–104.
197 Ibid., 104.
198 Bruce Eisner, "LSD and Aldous Huxley's *Island*", accessed July 19, 2018, https://web.archive.org/web/20060214023832/http://www.bruceeisner.com/writings/2006/01/lsd_and_aldous_.html. See also Partridge, *Re-Enchantment of the West*, 2: 124–125.
199 Eisner, "LSD".
200 Ibid.

of the status quo in order to tackle the besetting problems of overpopulation, untrammelled technological expansion and toxic nationalism. In 1990, Eisner started the Island Sanctuary Project (later the Island Foundation), with the hope of establishing a utopian community along the lines of Pala, where they could use psychedelic drugs as a sacrament and attempt to actualise their human potentialities. Though Eisner was unable to realise this utopian vision before his death in 2013, he nonetheless hoped that the use of psychedelic drugs would lead to new ideas or "memes" that would have a transformative effect on society.

The neo-shaman Terence McKenna was inspired by reading Huxley at the age of twelve. According to McKenna, Huxley held that "the psychedelic experience represented in all probability the last best hope for humankind to pull itself out of its self-created quagmire".[201] McKenna identifies *Island* as an important forerunner of the "archaic revitalization movement".[202] Put briefly, McKenna's thesis is that humans evolved through the use of psilocybin mushrooms in a prelapsarian Archaic past, in which peaceable goddess-worshipping "partnership" cultures (the last of which was the Minoan civilisation) achieved a "gnosis" with nature that was lost when the materialistic war-mongering "dominator" cultures (such as classical Greece and Rome) came to power in the West.[203] Cut off from a psychedelic connection with nature, humankind adopted a callous, instrumental attitude to the planet and avidly set about plundering its natural resources and polluting the environment in search of profit. However, in the twentieth century, the widespread use of psychedelic drugs offered hope of an "Archaic Revival".[204]

But while Huxley was an early influence, in particular his mystical interpretation of psychedelic experience, his filter theory of mind and his contention (examined below) that psychedelic drugs fostered a creaturely connection to the environment, McKenna's millennialism went against the grain of Huxley's thought. From the mid-1970s, McKenna began to predict that humanity and history were being propelled towards an Omega Point of absolute "novelty" and connectivity in 2012, whereupon time would end, the physical laws of the universe would cease to operate and all the objects therein would combine with their antimatter counterparts in an alchemical union of opposites,

201 Terence McKenna, foreword to *This Timeless Moment*, by Laura Huxley (Berkeley: Celestial Arts, 2002), xiii–xiv.

202 Ibid., xiv.

203 Terence McKenna, *Food of the Gods: The Search for the Original Tree of Knowledge* (London: Rider, 1992), xvi–xvii.

204 See ibid., 92–93.

creating an "ontological mutation from matter to photonic form".[205] According to McKenna, an "Oversoul" or "Overmind" was dragging history to the Omega Point. It is hard to determine, though, what exactly McKenna meant by the "Oversoul", since at times he conflated it with Jung's collective unconscious, while at others he represented it as being akin to the Tao, the logos, perhaps even (though he did not say it) Huxley's Mind at Large. Just as for Leary DNA represented the god within, it seems for McKenna that the "Oversoul" was a metaphor for a secular but godlike agency without, which would somehow endow *Homo sapiens* with godlike powers come the millennium. For Huxley, as I shall argue more fully below, the Palanese achieved a heaven on earth by, among other things, celebrating the body (through the practice of *maithuna*) and living in harmony with nature, whereas for McKenna the millennium involved an alchemical transmutation of matter (nature, body, etc.) into a disembodied ideal entity ("photonic form").

Huxley's Influence on the New Age and Deep Ecology Movements

The term "New Age" is notoriously hard to define. Some commentators maintain that it is too nebulous to have any meaning, while others insist that though it is possible to speak of New Age ideas, there was no such thing as a New Age movement.[206] There is also disagreement about when exactly the New Age began: some scholars see it emerging in the 1960s in the wake of the hippie movement; while others argue that it does not start until the late 1970s.[207] For Hanegraaff, there are two distinct forms of the New Age: the New Age *sensu stricto* is millennialistic and centres on the expectation of a New Age of Aquarius (see below) and is associated with Theosophy; the New Age *sensu lato* "emerged when increasing numbers of people, by the later 1970s, began to perceive a broad similarity between a wide variety of 'alternative' ideas and

205 Dennis McKenna and Terence McKenna, *Invisible Landscapes* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1993), 184–185. For a perceptive analysis of the 2012 phenomenon, see Wouter J. Hanegraaff, "'And End History. And Go to the Stars': Terence McKenna and 2012", in *Religion and Retributive Logic*, ed. Carole M. Cusack and Christopher Hartney (Boston: Brill, 2009).

206 See George D. Chryssides, "Defining the New Age", in *Handbook of the New Age*, ed. Daren Kemp and James R. Lewis (Boston: Brill, 2007), 5, 10; and Steven J. Sutcliffe and Ingvild Sælid Gilhus, introduction to *New Age Spirituality: Rethinking Religion* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2014), 4.

207 See Chryssides, "New Age", 6.

pursuits, and started to think of these as parts of one 'movement'".[208] As a quick glance at the gallimaufry of interests, practices and ideas that fall under the New Age *sensu lato* will confirm (crystals, homoeopathy, Reiki, Asian religions, ley lines, yoga, angels, Gaia, positive thinking, channelling, tarot cards, tai chi, qigong, astrology, neuro linguistic programming), the New Age movement emerged from the broader historical field of alternative spirituality.[209] As Steven Sutcliffe notes, the people involved in these pursuits did not, for the most part, think of themselves as participating in the New Age movement, but as practitioners of homoeopathy, Reiki, tai chi and so on. In this section, I examine Huxley's influence on various aspects of New Age culture and on the Deep Ecology movement, which is sometimes wrongly deemed to be but another offshoot of the New Age.

Historically, the idea of a messiah ushering in a new age has its origins in the Theosophy of Annie Besant, C.W. Leadbeater and Alice A. Bailey. As noted in Chapter 4, Besant and Leadbeater proclaimed from 1909 onwards that the Lord Maitreya would incarnate in the body of Jiddu Krishnamurti, thereby inaugurating a "new age",[210] in which there would appear a new iteration of humanity (the sixth sub-race of the fifth round), and in which the divisive Christianity of the past would be replaced with a new more ecumenical religion (presumably something like Theosophy).[211] According to Besant and Leadbeater, the Maitreya had previously incarnated in the body of Jesus of Nazareth, and was known as "the Christ".[212]

Despite the failure of the Maitreya to manifest in Krishnamurti, another Theosophist, Alice Bailey, proclaimed the imminent coming of "the Christ" who would inaugurate the new Age of Aquarius. Bailey discovered Theosophy in 1915, read the works of Blavatsky and Besant, and joined the TS in Pacific Groves, California. In 1919, she encountered the Master Djwhal Khul, and during the course of the next thirty years she produced nineteen books that she alleged were telepathically transmitted by the Master. Besant disapproved of Bailey's claims of telepathic contact with Djwhal Khul and expelled her from

208 Hanegraaff, *New Age Religion*, 97.

209 See Steven Sutcliffe, *Children of the New Age: A History of Spiritual Practices* (London: Routledge, 2003), 5.

210 Besant had predicted: "From our own standpoint it is an undoubted truth that the Christ [Maitreya] will come back at the beginning of the new age". Arthur H. Nethercot, *The Last Four Lives of Annie Besant* (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1963), 127.

211 See Annie Besant, *The Changing World and Lectures to Theosophical Students* (London: Theosophical Publishing Society, 1910), 235; and idem, *The Coming Race* (Madras: Theosophical Publishing House, 1917), 20.

212 See Tillett, *Elder Brother*, 105.

the TS in 1920.[213] Nonetheless, Bailey retained a broadly Theosophical cosmology and started her own Arcane School in 1923 to promote the coming of "the Christ". Bailey believed that history was "only the record of humanity's cyclic reaction to some inflowing divine energy, to some inspired leader, or to some Avatar".[214] The divine avatar Christ had incarnated two thousand years ago and had inaugurated the Christian era, or, in astrological terms, the Age of Pisces, symbolised by a fish (which, in the form of ichthys, is also the symbol of Christianity). Bailey held that the Christ would come again to kick-start the next astrological Age of Aquarius, which would be characterised by the "recognition of man's essential unity" and the "emergence of that new world religion whose keynote will be universality and initiation".[215] Bailey's vision of disparate but likeminded groups of spiritual seekers coming together to recite the "Great Invocation",[216] which would help to promote the prerequisite human amity for the Christ to manifest on Earth and signal the Age of Aquarius, anticipated many elements of the New Age movement of the 1970s.

On the face of it, Huxley's this-worldly philosophy, focused on realising one's human potentialities in the here and now, rather than banking on some chimerical New Jerusalem in the future, would seem to have no connection to this millennialist *sensu stricto* strain of the New Age. However, Huxley can be wrongly associated with this strain through his brother Julian, whose work, as demonstrated above, is sometimes quoted as an illustration of evolutionary mysticism. Another source of confusion is Julian Huxley's association with Pierre Teilhard de Chardin (Julian wrote an introduction to the 1959 English translation of *The Phenomenon of Man*), whose millennialist work was championed by key figures in the New Age.[217] Teilhard was a Jesuit priest and palaeontologist who attempted a synthesis of Darwinian evolution and Catholic

213 See Hammer, *Claiming Knowledge*, 65.

214 Alice Bailey, *The Reappearance of the Christ* (New York: Lucis Publishing Company, 2014), 11.

215 Ibid., 81–82.

216 Bailey claims that the Maitreya gave this ancient prayer to humanity on deciding in 1945 that he would reappear in the world. A single verse will suffice to convey the spirit of it: "From the point of Love within the Heart of God / Let love stream forth into the hearts of men. / May Christ return to Earth". See ibid., 11.

217 See for instance Marilyn Ferguson, *The Aquarian Conspiracy: Personal and Social Transformation in the 1980s* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981), 51n1: "Teilhard was the individual most often named as a profound influence by the Aquarian Conspirators who responded to a survey [about the most influential authors associated with the new Aquarian Age]. The next most frequently mentioned influences are Aldous Huxley, Carl Jung, and Abraham Maslow". See also George Sessions, "Deep Ecology and the New Age Movement", in *Deep Ecology for the Twenty-First Century* (London: Shambhala, 1995), 291–295.

eschatology. He argued that just as evolution produced an increasing biochemical complexity, reaching its apogee in *Homo sapiens*, so evolution would also lead to a "complexification" of the web of human culture, language and consciousness (which he termed the "noosphere"). The apotheosis of evolution will be reached at the "Omega point", whereupon the cosmic body of Christ will be realised in the universe (the "Christogenesis"), and humankind will be reunited with God. While Julian Huxley could agree with Teilhard "over the essential facts of cultural and organic evolution",[218] there was no question of Julian endorsing Teilhard's view of evolution as the teleological unfolding of God's divine plan.[219] And yet, the two are often spoken of in the same breath, as if they were of one mind on the subject of evolution.

For instance, Douglas Groothuis quotes the following from Julian Huxley's book *Religion Without Revelation* (1927):

> Man is that part of reality in which and through which the cosmic process has become conscious and has begun to comprehend itself. His supreme task is to increase that conscious comprehension and to apply it as fully as possible to guide the course of events.[220]

What Julian means is that humans have become aware of evolution (this is the "cosmic process"), and should attempt to evolve themselves through positive eugenics (thereby guiding the evolutionary "course of events").[221] While Groothuis concedes that Julian Huxley is "far from a mystic in the New Age sense", he nonetheless contends that Julian "laid the motivational groundwork for the New Age" and that his "vision has sparked the New Age movement with optimism and hope".[222] In the same paragraph, he mentions the work of Teilhard, who "prophesied a progressive harmonization and unification of world consciousness reaching the 'Omega Point'", thereby suggesting, by their contiguity, that both writers were ploughing the same furrow.[223] June Deery seems

218 Julian Huxley, *Memories*, 2: 24.

219 For instance, see Julian Huxley, introduction to *The Phenomenon of Man*, by Pierre Teilhard de Chardin (New York: HarperPerennial, 1959), 19, in which he confesses that as a scientist he "find[s] it impossible to follow [Teilhard] all the way in his gallant attempt to reconcile the supernatural elements in Christianity with the facts and implications of evolution".

220 Quoted in Douglas R. Groothuis, *Unmasking the New Age* (Downer's Grove: Intervarsity Press, 1986), 29.

221 For a thorough discussion of Julian Huxley's concept of evolution, see Swetlitz, "Julian Huxley and the End of Evolution", 181–217.

222 Groothuis, *Unmasking the New Age*, 29.

223 Ibid.

to endorse Groothuis' misinterpretation of Julian Huxley's work (she quotes the excerpt above from *Religion Without Revelation*), since she notes that "this kind of speculation is still not orthodox science", when in fact Julian is taking a standard Darwinian position.[224] Likewise, Erik Davis maintains that Teilhard's views on evolution were "anticipated" by Julian Huxley.[225]

The New Age evolved out of the counterculture and the hippie movement,[226] and in the following paragraphs I shall assess Huxley's influence on these movements. Jay Stevens notes that in the Psych Shop in Haight-Ashbury in 1966, Huxley's books (*Doors of Perception*, *Heaven and Hell*, *The Perennial Philosophy*) were sold alongside those by Leary and Alan Watts, but he seems surprised by the esoteric complexion of the other books: "the perennial philosophy came heavily spiced with astrology, numerology, alchemy, black magic, voodoo".[227] This kind of eclecticism would become typical of the New Age *sensu lato*, whose spiritual seekers selected their doctrines from the spiritual supermarket in a manner that is often referred to as *bricolage*.[228] It is hardly surprising, then, in such a milieu that Huxley's ideas would become conflated with those of other thinkers (Leary, Heard, Teilhard *et al.*) who subscribed to spiritual evolution. "When a hippie claimed", writes Jay Stevens,

> that "I'm from another race, not black, not white, maybe I'm of a race that's not here yet, a race without a name", what you heard were echoes of Huxley's evolutionary romanticism filtered through the dog-eared science fiction epics that graced every hippie pad.[229]

Huxley's ideas would also have been derived second-hand from people like Leary, who was influenced by Huxley's filter thesis and maintained that

224 Deery, *Mysticism of Science*, 155.

225 Erik Davis, *Techgnosis: Myth, Magic and Mysticism in the Age of Information* (London: Serpent's Tail, 1999), 342–343.

226 See Chryssides, "New Age", 7–8.

227 Stevens, *Storming Heaven*, 239.

228 The term was introduced by Claude Lévi-Strauss in *The Savage Mind* (1962), and refers to the way in which myths are built up by synthesising and recombining earlier mythic materials. See Partridge, *Re-Enchantment of the West*, 1: 117.

229 Stevens, *Storming Heaven*, 239. Stevens is perhaps thinking of *Childhood's End* (1953) by Arthur C. Clarke, which was beloved by Ken Kesey's Merry Pranksters, in which a great evolutionary leap occurs with the next generation being endowed with various paranormal powers and communicating telepathically with an Overmind. At the end of the novel, this new iteration of humanity merges with the Overmind while their parents go extinct. Doubtless, the book resonated with Kesey *et al.* because they felt that their own generation, due in large part to their use of psychedelic drugs, was new and distinct from their parent's square, conformist generation. See Tom Wolfe, *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test* (London: Black Swan, 1989), 150.

psychedelic drugs enabled one to transcend the "fake-prop TV studio" of American consumer culture.[230] "All behavior involves learned games", writes Leary.

> But only that rare Westerner we call "mystic" or who has had a visionary experience of some sort sees clearly the game structure of behavior. Most of the rest of us spend our time struggling with roles and rules and goals and concepts of games which are implicit and confusedly not seen as games.[231]

These games include the "nationalist game", the "racial game", the "family game", the "ego game", and are akin to "Mr. Aldous Huxley's reducing valves" in blinding us to all but a small culturally sanctioned slice of reality.[232]

Karl Baier argues that for Huxley there are three filters: the biochemical reducing valve of the brain; the filter of language and symbols; and the filter of "establishment" thinking concerning morality, consumerism, militarism and so on. According to Baier, this "third filter" is evident in *Island*, but he does not elaborate on precisely how this filter works.[233] The Palanese are demonstrably free from the canker of consumerism, for example, by dint of being isolated from the industrial revolution and the global capitalism it engendered. Indeed, Pala enjoys the autarkic anarchist economy Huxley had been advocating since *Ends and Means*. In a key scene, Will Farnaby catches Murugan reading an illicit book in the laboratory, which he symbolically claims at first is *Elementary Ecology* but it turns out to be the Sears Roebuck summer catalogue, which Colonel Dipa (who covets Pala's oil reserves) has given Murugan to corrupt him. "*The serpent tempted me, and I did eat*", Farnaby reflects.

> The tree in the midst of the garden was called the Tree of Consumer Goods, and to the inhabitants of every underdeveloped Eden the tiniest taste of its fruit [...] had power to bring the shameful knowledge that, industrially speaking, they were stark-naked. The future Raja of Pala was

230 Timothy Leary, "Start Your Own Religion", in *Turn On, Tune In, Drop Out* (Oakland: Ronin Publishers, 1999), 5. See also Karl Baier, "High Mysticism: On the Interplay Between the Psychedelic Movement and Academic Study of Mysticism", in *Constructions of Mysticism as a Universal: Roots and Interactions across Borders*, ed. Annette Wilke (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2018), 12.

231 Timothy Leary, "How to Change Behavior", in *LSD: The Consciousness-Expanding Drug*, 106.

232 Ibid., 106, 111.

233 See Baier, "High Mysticism", 11.

> being made to realize that he was no more than the untrousered ruler of a tribe of savages.[234]

Significantly, Huxley uses the Sears Roebuck catalogue as a symbol, in his first letter to Osmond, for what "constitutes the conventionally 'real' world" to the average American.[235] Farnaby suggests to Murugan that he import a million copies of the catalogue and distribute them to the denizens of Pala in order to convert them into capitalist consumers: "Then they'll start clamouring for Progress", he tells Murugan, "oil wells, armaments", etc.[236] But Murugan dolefully replies that the Palanese simply are not interested in the trinkets of capitalism as a result of *maithuna* and the *moksha*-medicine: "It's all just stupid and disgusting. No progress, only sex, sex, sex. And of course that beastly dope they're all given".[237]

As a result of reading *Island*, Leary was inspired to start a psychedelic retreat in Zihuatanejo, Mexico, in summer 1962.[238] Zihuatanejo was supposedly a training centre for the International Foundation for Internal Freedom (IFIF). IFIF was conceived, writes Stevens, as "a cluster of autonomous cells, each built around the nucleus of an IFIF-trained guide. These cells, as they grew, would divide, forming other cells, until the world was speckled with mini-Islands".[239] When Leary had asked Huxley how best to spread the psychedelic gospel, Huxley urged him to "turn on the elites", in other words, to convince influential psychiatrists, scientists, intellectuals and well-connected businessmen of the benefit of psychedelic drugs, so that they might pave the way for government research grants and the responsible, guided use of psychedelics among the general public.[240] Leary was initially responsive to Huxley's approach but changed his mind after meeting Allen Ginsberg, who persuaded him to reject "Huxley's elitist perspective" in favour of his "American open-to-the-public approach".[241] Leary and Ginsberg hoped to reach a critical mass of four million people using psychedelic drugs in America, which would, they imagined, catalyse a psychedelic consciousness shift from the prevailing egocentric, capitalist, Western mode to a more contemplative, alternative, Eastern mode in the manner of *Island*.[242]

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234 Huxley, *Island*, 134.
235 See Smith, *Letters*, 669.
236 Huxley, *Island*, 134–135.
237 Ibid., 135.
238 Stevens, *Storming Heaven*, 148.
239 Ibid., 151.
240 Ibid., 114.
241 Leary, *Flashbacks*, 50.
242 See Stevens, *Storming Heaven*, 154 and Leary, *High Priest*, 132.

In addition to the ramshackle Catalina Hotel (renamed "Freedom House") in Zihuatanejo, Leary rented two houses in Newton, which he presented, in the IFIF literature, as "transcendental" communities "influenced by the ideas elaborated in Aldous Huxley's recent novel, *Island*".[243] But, as Stevens notes, the reality was more prosaic, with one of the living rooms sporting a collage of "nudes clipped from magazines, with a single solitary bra pinned to it – a visual non sequitur that strengthened the impression that underneath the rhetoric about consciousness expansion and mystic enlightenment, a lot of uninhibited sex was taking place", as opposed to the perhaps more contemplative practice of *maithuna*.[244] A similar atmosphere – more Day-Glo psychedelic party than mindfulness retreat – obtained at Zihuatanejo, and Freedom House was closed by the Mexican authorities in 1963.[245] Leary's vision of achieving mini psychedelic islands by "turning on" the American public, who would be shepherded through a profound spiritual experience with an IFIF guide whispering choice passages from the *Tibetan Book of the Dead*, never came to pass. What happened was that although by 1967, according to Leary, four million Americans had taken a psychedelic substance, the "psychedelic movement" that emerged was chaotic, leaderless and lacking the spiritual parameters Leary and the IFIF guides had sought to provide.[246]

For example, Ken Kesey and his Merry Pranksters had nothing but disdain for "set and setting", and Kesey's "Acid Tests", the mass psychedelic happenings that took place in 1965–66, seemed designed to induce a bad trip, what with the horripilating feedback loops, stroboscopic lights and the Pranksters urging on the psychedelic mayhem in their Day-Glo harlequin outfits.[247] Partly as a result of the hostile media coverage of the Acid Tests, LSD research was phased out and possession of the drug was banned in every state by October 1966, fulfilling Huxley's prophecy that widespread use by the general public would lead to prohibition.[248] The upshot was that black-market LSD was manufactured to fill the void, and young people, beckoned on by the claims of Leary and Kesey, began taking it to blow their mind, with no spiritual aspirations or expectations, and consequently there was an increase in bad trips requiring psychiatric treatment.[249] In retrospect, even Leary admitted that Huxley's

243 Quoted in Stevens, *Storming Heaven*, 154.

244 Ibid.

245 See ibid., 159.

246 See Leary, *High Priest*, 133.

247 See Wolfe, *Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test*, 207: "Let the setting be as unserene and lurid as the Prankster arts can make it and let your set be only what is on your … *brain*, man, and let your guide […] be a bunch of Day-Glo crazies".

248 See Stevens, *Storming Heaven*, 217, 268.

249 See ibid., 227.

"elitist position was ethologically correct" and judged his own attitude "naively democratic".[250]

Perhaps Leary's most enduring contribution to the hippie movement was his mantra: "turn-on, tune-in, drop-out". To turn on is take a psychedelic substance, to "detach from the rigid addictive focus on the fake-prop TV studio-set and to refocus on the natural energies within the body".[251] To tune in is to be "reborn", to alter your life in accordance with your psychedelic vision: "you change your corner of the TV-studio society", turn your home into a shrine and promote psychedelic art, music, dance, dress etc.[252] To drop out is to reject the fake TV-studio American consumer culture: "Quit school. Quit your job. Don't vote. Avoid all politics. Do not waste conscious thinking on TV-studio games".[253] This was Leary's message when he addressed the mass audience (estimates vary between twenty and thirty thousand people) who had assembled in the San Francisco Golden Gate Park for the Gathering of the Tribes for the First Human Be-In in January 1967.[254] Turn on, tune in, drop out: this was Leary's attempt to remove the "third filter" of "establishment" thinking, and the "system" struck back, doling out a draconian sentence of thirty years for smuggling a nugatory amount of marijuana across the Mexican border, and, when that conviction was quashed on a technicality, handing down a sentence of twenty years for marijuana possession.[255] Hofmann notes that "the real aim was to put under lock and key the seducer and instigator of youth, who could not otherwise be prosecuted".[256]

Huxley exercised a demonstrable influence on the New Age movement. One of the key texts of the incipient New Age was Marilyn Ferguson's *The Aquarian Conspiracy* (1980). Ferguson believed that humankind was on the cusp of a new Aquarian Age of spirituality based on personal experience rather than organised religion, holism as opposed to dualism, alternative therapies and self-healing rather than Western medicine, in which cutting-edge science (such as Karl Pribram's "holographic theory" and the evolutionary speculations of Teilhard de Chardin) could be reconciled with Eastern wisdom. Ferguson issued a questionnaire asking respondents to name the most significant thinkers for the Aquarian Age, and the most frequently named authors were "Teilhard de Chardin, C.G. Jung, Abraham Maslow, Carl Rogers, Aldous Huxley, Roberto

250 Quoted in ibid., 294.
251 Timothy Leary, *Start Your Own Religion* (Millbrook, NY: Kriya Press, 1967), 2.
252 Ibid., 2, 4.
253 Ibid., 4.
254 See Stevens, *Storming Heaven*, 259–260.
255 See ibid., 212–213, 282.
256 Hofmann, *LSD*, 61.

Assagioli, and J. Krishnamurti".[257] For Ferguson, Huxley formed the "hub of a kind of pre-Aquarian conspiracy" of writers and intellectuals who were interested in "transcendence and transformation".[258] Huxley's work was only now beginning to be appreciated; he was a "proponent of consciousness research, decentralization in government and the economy, paranormal healing, the uses of altered awareness, visual retraining, and acupuncture" when such ideas were heretical.[259] Ferguson praises *Island* for its depiction of a utopian society that anticipated many of the aspects of the new Aquarian culture she was describing, such as the emphasis on self-healing, self-improvement, an education that caters to the body as well as the mind, a spiritual respect for the environment and a marriage of Western science and Eastern mysticism.[260] With these Aquarian ideas in the cultural ether, Huxley's books, she notes, are enjoying a new surge of popularity.[261] She approvingly quotes from Huxley's essay "Drugs That Shape Men's Minds" (1958), in which Huxley predicted that psychedelic drugs would lead to a religious revival: "From being an activity concerned mainly with symbols religion will be transformed into an activity concerned mainly with experience and intuition – an everyday mysticism".[262]

Given the amorphous nature of the New Age, and the eclecticism of its spiritual beliefs, it is hard to be precise about Huxley's influence. However, the congruence of Huxley's thinking with certain aspects of the New Age can be gauged from George Chryssides' summary of the New Age movement's "salient features", which includes "an optimistic view of the self, even to the extent of identif[ying] the self with a 'God within', allied to which there is a belief in the desirability of self-improvement or 'empowerment'".[263] Obviously, the idea that God is within can be found in several religious traditions, but Huxley tirelessly proclaimed the identity of *atman* and *brahman*, and many of his human potentialities, such as the practice of the Alexander technique, were adopted by the New Age. There is an "emphasis on health and healing – physical, mental and spiritual – which expresses itself in alternative medicine, as well as spiritual practices such as various types of meditation".[264] Huxley was an early advocate of meditation and alternative therapy, such as the Bates method,

257 Ferguson, *Aquarian Conspiracy*, 420. See also Deery, *Mysticism of Science*, 152.
258 Ferguson, *Aquarian Conspiracy*, 52. Ferguson uses the word "conspiracy" in its original sense of breathing together.
259 Ibid.
260 See ibid., 54–55.
261 Ibid., 130.
262 Quoted in ibid., 375.
263 Chryssides, "New Age", 22.
264 Ibid.

hypnotic passes, colonic irrigation, dianetics and E-Therapy. There is a "questioning of traditional religion", which "results in an eclectic approach to a variety of forms of religious expression, ranging from eastern spirituality to neo-Paganism and shamanism".[265] Huxley's promotion of the Perennial Philosophy as a highest common factor that united the world religions struck a receptive cord in the New Age, whose proponents rejected institutional religion but adopted certain doctrines, such as karma and reincarnation, from the so-called spiritual supermarket. Moreover, Huxley's later endorsement of this-worldly traditions, such as Zen Buddhism, Taoism and Tantra, in which nature is regarded as sacred (see the Deep Ecology section below), anticipated subsequent ecocentric movements such as neo-Paganism and neo-shamanism – see for instance the work of Terence McKenna above and Carlos Castaneda.[266]

Another salient feature of the New Age, though one not mentioned by Chryssides, is the attempt to reconcile certain aspects of science, such as quantum physics and relativity theory, with spirituality. James R. Lewis notes that prior to the publication of *The Tao of Physics* (1975) by Fritjof Capra, the New Age was antagonistic to science.[267] Capra argued that modern science grew out of the dualism of Descartes, which valorised the mind at the expense of the body. "The 'Cartesian' division", writes Capra,

> allowed scientists to treat matter as dead and completely separate from themselves, and to see the material world as a multitude of different objects assembled into a huge machine. Such a mechanistic world view was held by Isaac Newton who constructed his mechanics on its basis and made it the foundation of classical physics.[268]

Capra promoted the monistic philosophies of Taoism and Zen Buddhism, which regarded nature as sacred and held that humans were an organic part of nature, in contrast to the dualistic Christian attitude that decreed that humans were superior to nature by virtue of their souls. "In the Eastern view", writes Capra, the "cosmos is seen as one inseparable reality – for ever in motion, alive, organic", as opposed to a congeries of isolated objects.[269] In much the same

265 Ibid.

266 Partridge notes that Castaneda was highly influenced by Huxley. See Christopher Partridge, "Carlos Castaneda and the Construction of Non-Ordinary Reality", in *Altered Consciousness in the Twentieth Century*, 192.

267 See James R. Lewis, "Science and the New Age", in *Handbook of the New Age*, 218.

268 Fritjof Capra, *The Tao of Physics: An Exploration of the Parallels Between Modern Physics and Eastern Mysticism* (Boulder: Shambhala, 1975), 22. Capra acknowledged the influence of Huxley. See Partridge, *High Culture*, 276.

269 Capra, *The Tao of Physics*, 24.

way, the "modern physicist [...] has come to see the world as a system of inseparable, interacting and ever-moving components with man being an integral part of the system".[270] Thus for Capra "modern physics" and Eastern mystics both endorsed a holistic or unified worldview.[271] Henceforth, quantum physics and relativity theory were regarded as part of the "new paradigm" associated with the New Age in contrast to the old mechanistic Newtonian paradigm.[272] As noted in Chapter 2, as early as 1925 Huxley had argued, in line with the work of J.W.N. Sullivan, Arthur Eddington and J.B.S. Haldane, that the new physics supported an idealist, rather than a materialist, worldview. Although he soon abandoned this position, from the mid-1930s he subscribed to a metaphysical monism and in his later years he was especially interested in this-worldly Eastern philosophies that regarded nature as sacred (see the Deep Ecology section below). Furthermore, Huxley argued that for scientists

> the ultimate goal is the creation of a monistic system in which [...] the world's enormous multiplicity is reduced to something like unity, and the endless succession of unique events of a great many different kinds gets tidied and simplified into a single rational order.[273]

The belief in holism is another New Age tenet.[274] The term was coined by the South African statesman Jan Christiaan Smuts in *Holism and Evolution* (1926). Hanegraaff argues that the New Age notion of holism does not refer to a coherent theory or worldview, but is chiefly used in opposition to scientific reductionism and Christian dualism.[275] The New Age objection to Christian dualism was most cogently presented by the historian of science Lynn White in his seminal essay "The Historic Roots of Our Ecological Crisis" (1967). While White was not part of the New Age, his thesis that the natural theology of Christianity was to blame for science and technology and that God's exhortation in the Bible to "subdue" the earth and have "dominion" over its animals had fostered the attitude that the natural world was inert matter to be exploited for human profit, was enthusiastically embraced by those in the New Age and ecology movements.[276] Huxley had made much the same argument

270 Ibid., 25.
271 See Lewis, "Science and the New Age", 219.
272 See Ferguson, *Aquarian Conspiracy*, 27.
273 Huxley, *Literature and Science*, in *CE* 6: 94.
274 See Lewis, "Science and the New Age", 214.
275 See Hanegraaff, *New Age Religion*, 119.
276 See Lewis, "Science and the New Age", 216.

almost twenty years previously. "The Catholic Church", he writes in "The Double Crisis" (1950),

> officially teaches that sub-human lives may be treated as though they were things. But to any realistic observer it is surely obvious that not only do we have no right to treat living beings as things; we have no right to treat even things as mere things. Things must be treated as though they were parts of a complex and beautifully co-ordinated living organism. We are beginning to discover that to treat them in any other way may be to condemn the whole human experiment to failure.[277]

Huxley's holistic ecological stance here not only anticipates the New Age's holistic criticism of Christian dualism, it also foreshadows the Gaia hypothesis advanced by James Lovelock and Lynn Margulis in the 1970s, which proposed that the earth "can be regarded *as if* it were a single living organism".[278] The Gaia hypothesis was eagerly appropriated by New Agers, who, as Christopher Partridge points out, blithely ignored the *as if* and thought of the planet as a literal "living organism".[279] Huxley's attitude is closer to the original version of the Gaia hypothesis than to its subsequent New Age reception, which was in part endorsed by Lovelock himself.[280] "We have to treat the planet *as though* it were a living organism", writes Huxley,

> with all the love and care and understanding which any living organism deserves. If we do not treat it in this way, then we shall destroy the world on which we live, and this destroyed world will in turn destroy us.[281]

George Sessions notes that critics of Deep Ecology have often conflated it with the New Age, since both movements are concerned with the environment.[282] In his 1972 Deep Ecology manifesto, Arne Næss defined it in opposition to the Shallow Ecology movement, which was anthropocentric and sought to combat pollution and conserve resources in order to safeguard the "health and affluence of people in developed countries".[283] Deep Ecologists, on the

277 Aldous Huxley, "The Double Crisis", in *CE* 5: 144.
278 Partridge, *Re-Enchantment of the West*, 2: 61.
279 Ibid.
280 See ibid., 62.
281 Huxley, "More Nature in Art", 29; my italics.
282 See Sessions, "Deep Ecology", 291.
283 Arne Næss, "The Shallow and the Deep, Long-Range Ecology Movements: A Summary", in *Deep Ecology*, 151.

other hand, promote an ecocentric paradigm, in which humans are regarded as but one part of nature and are therefore not accorded an exceptional status. Not only, then, was Deep Ecology conceived before (for some scholars at any rate) the crystallisation of the New Age, Deep Ecologists such as Sessions are highly critical of the New Age attitude to the environment. The New Age movement, as is evident from Ferguson's book, was intimately bound up with Teilhard du Chardin's evolutionary theories concerning the Omega Point. For Teilhard, Sessions notes, the "spiritual destiny of humans is to technologically dominate the Earth and to replace the natural world with a human controlled artificial environment",[284] whereas Deep Ecologists advocate living in harmony with nature, rather than subjecting it to technology as if nature were in fact a God-given resource to manipulate and exploit.[285] It is indicative of how beguiled the early New Age was with technology and progress that Ferguson praises H.G. Wells' totalitarian technocratic tract *The Open Conspiracy* (1928), and approvingly quotes Wells' peroration to his 1902 lecture "The Discovery of the Future", in which he shares his vision of a eugenic *Übermensch*: "a day will come, one day in the unending succession of days, when beings who are now latent in our loins shall stand upon this earth as one stands upon a footstool and shall touch the stars".[286]

For New Age thinkers, Teilhard's ideas on evolution were mixed in with the Gaia hypothesis of Lovelock and Margulis with human beings functioning as the brains of Gaia.[287] Another influential New Age author was Buckminster Fuller, who argued that "humans are now in a position to take control of the biological systems of the earth", and envisaged the earth as a spaceship piloted by humans.[288] This nexus of ideas can be found in Leary, whose grandiose evolutionary scheme comprised "eight mutational phases", whose final four "larval" circuits encoded humankind's colonisation of space.[289] Sessions notes that Teilhard's promotion of human consciousness as the "supreme value" only reinforces the Cartesian dualism that is otherwise anathema for New Agers. Indeed, John Passmore argues that Teilhard's vision of "man perfecting nature" derives from German idealism, and in particular the absolute idealism of Hegel, for whom *Geist* achieved self-consciousness in man (or at any rate Hegel) and revealed the material world as ideal.[290]

284 Sessions, "Deep Ecology", 293.
285 See Partridge, *Re-Enchantment of the West*, 2: 58.
286 Wells quoted in Ferguson, *Aquarian Conspiracy*, 49.
287 See Sessions, "Deep Ecology", 290, 300–301.
288 Ibid., 291.
289 See Leary, *Exo-Psychology*, 8.
290 See Sessions, "Deep Ecology", 299.

The philosophy of Deep Ecology has its roots in the work of H.D. Thoreau, D.H. Lawrence, Aldous Huxley, Alan Watts and Gary Snyder, among others.[291] Sessions and Bill Devall argue that the Perennial Philosophy provides a metaphysical rationale for the Deep Ecology movement. They write that

> a system of ethics or a way of life was the end result of the perennial philosophy approach. Spiritual growth and human maturity developed from the "enlightenment" of realizing that our narrow isolated socialized self is an illusion – that in reality, we are intimately connected with all the natural processes around us.[292]

This statement fails to take into account that for some of the traditions included in the Perennial Philosophy, such as neo-Advaita, both the self and the natural world are regarded as an illusion, and only the enlightened mystic can perceive the self as the Self, or in other words as *brahman*. The final end of the Perennial Philosophy is mystical knowledge of *brahman*, this is what constitutes enlightenment, not the mundane knowledge that we are connected to nature. On the other hand, there are many passages in *The Perennial Philosophy* that endorse Deep Ecology, such as the following:

> The doctrine that God is in the world has an important practical corollary – the sacredness of nature, and the sinfulness and folly of man's overweening efforts to be her master rather than her intelligently docile collaborator. Sub-human lives and even things are to be treated with respect and understanding, not brutally oppressed to serve our human ends.[293]

If *Island* is Huxley's Deep Ecology text par excellence, it is because the Palanese are influenced by the life-affirming this-worldly traditions of Zen Buddhism, Taoism and Tantra, rather than the Perennial Philosophy. Sessions and Devall praise the Palanese for beginning their children's education with ecology, and selectively quote from the following passage: "We give them an up-to-date version of Aesop's Fables", the school's principal tells Farnaby,

291 Sessions, preface to *Deep Ecology*, ix.

292 George Sessions and Bill Devall, *Deep Ecology: Living as if Nature Mattered* (Layton: Gibbs Smith, 1985), 80.

293 Huxley, *Perennial Philosophy*, 76. See also Thomas R, Dunlap, *Faith in Nature: Environmentalism as Religious Quest* (London: University of Washington Press, 2004), 114.

> Not the old anthropomorphic fictions, but true ecological fables with built-in, cosmic morals. And another wonderful parable for children is the story of erosion. We don't have any good examples of erosion here; so we show them photographs of what has happened in Rendang, in India and China, in Greece and the Levant, in Africa and America – all the places where greedy, stupid people have tried to take without giving, to exploit without love or understanding. Treat Nature well, and Nature will treat you well. Hurt or destroy Nature, and Nature will soon destroy you. […] "Do as you would be done by" applies to our dealings with all kinds of life in every part of the world. We shall be permitted to live on this planet only for as long as we treat all nature with compassion and intelligence.[294]

Sessions and Devall also underline that the children are inculcated with the relational nature of living,[295] which chimes, though they do not mention it, with the first point in Arne Næss' manifesto: "Rejection of the man-in-environment image in favour of *the relational, total-field image*".[296] Instead of man as the Hegelian subject with the world or nature as passive object, man is inextricably woven into the "biospherical net or field of intrinsic relations".[297] In "More Nature in Art", Huxley observes that while Western philosophers think of the world in terms of substance, Taoist philosophers think of the world in terms of relations, which is "quite characteristic of modern science".[298] Alan Watts, another key thinker for Deep Ecology, makes the same point in *The Joyous Cosmology* (1962): Taoism

> does not deny physical distinctions but sees them as the plain expression of unity. As one sees so clearly in Chinese painting, the individual tree or rock is not on but *with* the space that forms its background.[…] It is for this reason that when a Zen master is asked about the universal or the ultimate, he replies with the immediate and particular – "The cypress tree in the yard!" Here, then, we have […] a spiritual materialism – a standpoint far closer to relativity and field theory in modern science than to any religious supernaturalism.[299]

294 Huxley, *Island*, 212. See also Sessions and Devall, *Living as if Nature Mattered*, 170–171.
295 Sessions and Devall, *Living as if Nature Mattered*, 170.
296 Arne Næss, "The Shallow and the Deep", 151; his italics.
297 Ibid.
298 Huxley, "More Nature in Art", 34.
299 Alan Watts, *The Joyous Cosmology: Adventures in the Chemistry of Consciousness* (Novato, CA: New World Library, 2013), 7.

Watts was an inspiration for Capra, who, in *The Tao of Physics*, gives several examples of the overlap between quantum field theory and Taoism and Zen Buddhism; and, as noted above, Capra was enthusiastically co-opted by both the New Age and Deep Ecology movements.[300]

For the most part, though, Deep Ecologists are far more sceptical of science and technology than early New Age advocates such as Ferguson. Sessions and Devall emphasise that science is used sparingly on Pala, to serve the local needs of the community, and quote Mr Menon who affirms that the Palanese have "not the faintest desire to land on the backside of the moon"; rather, they cherish the "modest ambition to live as fully human beings in harmony with the rest of life on this island at this latitude on this planet".[301] Likewise, the Deep Ecologist Del Ivan Janik points out that the Palanese keep technology to a minimum: such as "the production of electricity for refridgeration [*sic*] and labor-intensive light industry that d[oes] not deplete the island's natural resources".[302] While *Island* exemplifies Huxley's adage that science, like the Sabbath, was made for man and not man for science,[303] Deep Ecologists underestimate or ignore the extent to which science and technology bolster the society of Pala. As noted in Chapter 2, Dr Andrew introduces modern medicine as well as hypnotism to Pala; he cultivates hybrid strains of indigenous crops and uses selective breeding on the island's cattle and chickens; while his grandson, Dr Robert, introduces positive eugenics.[304] Where Deep Ecologists advocated population reduction in order to achieve full bio-diversity, Huxley deplored overpopulation because, among other things, he perceived that "human quality is being thwarted by the mere increase of human quantity".[305] Men and women can only realise their human potentialities in an optimum environment, i.e. a world in which natural resources have not been ravaged by overpopulation.[306]

Moreover, as Peter Mortensen points out, Huxley also championed "'shallow' green concerns like resource conservation, soil quality, food and water supply, environmental health risks, urban design, sustainable energy extraction and the aesthetic appreciation of nature".[307] Mortensen argues that Huxley should be positioned in the branch of social ecology known as the Appropriate

300 See Capra, *Tao of Physics*, 207–223.
301 Sessions and Devall, *Living as if Nature Mattered*, 170.
302 Del Ivan Janik, "Environmental Consciousness in Modern Literature: Four Representative Examples", in *Deep Ecology*, 108.
303 See Smith, *Letters*, 557.
304 Huxley, *Island*, 83.
305 Aldous Huxley, "The Population Explosion", in *The Human Situation*, 52.
306 See ibid., 52–53.
307 Peter Mortensen, "Tripping Back to Nature: Aldous Huxley, Psychedelics, and Pro-Technology Environmentalism", in *Aldous Huxley Annual* 15 (2015): 273.

Technology movement, which came to prominence in the 1960s and 70s and was inspired by the ideas of William Morris, Gandhi, the economist E.F. Schumacher and the "design guru" Buckminster Fuller.[308] The Appropriate Technology movement promoted a range of small-scale, eco-friendly technologies that could be employed at the individual (rather than a national or governmental) level, that drew on both Western and Eastern culture, new and old techniques. Mortensen gives some examples from Stewart Brand's *Whole Earth Catalogue* (1968–80), including "composting toilets, photovoltaic solar panels, windmills, [...] wood-burning stoves, greenhouses and geodesic domes"; it also promoted "self-development through yoga, Tantra, meditation, breathing exercises, bicycling, martial arts and the adoption of vegetarian and biodynamic dietary habits".[309] In this light, Mortensen argues, Huxley's environmentalism is closer to the Appropriate Technology approach than to Deep Ecology. Huxley also suggested a number of larger-scale, technological interventions in order to combat overpopulation and the concomitant depletion of natural resources that would have been antipathetic to Deep Ecology, such as the "development of deserts, tundras, and tropical forests"; the "enclosure and fertilizing of landlocked bays and inlets"; the "transformation of poor land into productive fishponds"; and while he concedes that nuclear fission is a potentially dangerous source of power, he opines that it may become a necessary evil.[310]

Huxley also argued that the use of psychedelic drugs could foster a love for nature and the environment. Mystical experience, whether induced by fasting, spiritual exercises or LSD-25, "makes possible a sense of unity and solidarity with the world".[311] In *Island*, the *moksha*-medicine induces a mystical experience of the godhead as immanent in nature, and this augments the ecological education of the Palanese with a religious reverence for nature. This nature mysticism is expressed by the Old Raja in a poem:

> That hawk below us turning,
> Those black and arrowy swifts
> Trailing long silver wires across the air –
> The shrillness of their crying.
>
> How far, you say, from the hot plains,
> How far, reproachfully, from all my people!

308 Ibid., 273–274.
309 Ibid., 274.
310 Huxley, "Double Crisis", in *CE* 5: 140–141. See also Mortensen, "Tripping Back to Nature", 277–278.
311 Aldous Huxley, "Man and Religion", in *The Human Situation*, 201.

> And yet how close! For here between the cloudy
> Sky and the sea below, suddenly visible,
> I read their luminous secret and my own.[312]

Dr Robert tells Farnaby that the "luminous secret" is the "Buddha Nature in all our perpetual perishing".[313] Farnaby witnesses the ceremony whereby the children of Pala are initiated into adolescence, which includes climbing a precipice and being given the *moksha*-medicine. During the ceremony, Dr Robert explains the significance of the Śiva Nataraja statue in the temple. Śiva is the supreme godhead, it will be recalled, of the Tantric tradition. "Look at the great round halo, fringed with the symbols of fire", Dr Robert tells the teenage initiates, "within which the god is dancing. It stands for Nature, for the world of mass and energy. Within it Shiva-Nataraja dances the dance of endless becoming and passing away. It's his *lila*, his cosmic play".[314] Under one of Śiva's feet, Dr Robert observes, is the demon Muyalaka, "the embodiment of ignorance, the manifestation of greedy, possessive selfhood".[315] As a result of taking the *moksha*-medicine, the assembled teenagers "will know what it's like to be what in fact you are", i.e. a divine actor in Śiva's cosmic play, rather than the separate self they ignorantly assume they are, condemned to a dualistic relationship with the world.[316] While the *moksha*-medicine can only offer a transient glimpse of "enlightening and liberating grace", it is hoped that the Palanese will henceforth use this insight into their place in the "Order of Things" and live in harmony with the Tao, rather than stubbornly asserting their selfhood.[317] The emphasis in *Island*, then, is not on otherworldly salvation in "heaven" but on making Pala a heaven on earth. The "Kingdom of God is within us", affirms Huxley in *The Human Situation* (1977), "but at the same time it is our business to contribute to the founding of the Kingdom of God upon earth".[318]

In the late essay "Culture and the Individual" (originally published in *Playboy* magazine in 1962), Huxley praises psychedelic drugs for their ability to catalyse the "immediate mystical experience of being at one with the fundamental Oneness that manifests itself in the infinite diversity of things

312 Huxley, *Island*, 162.
313 Ibid.
314 Ibid., 167.
315 Ibid., 168.
316 Ibid., 169.
317 Ibid.
318 Huxley, "Population Explosion", in *The Human Situation*, 54. See also Dana Sawyer, "Brave New World-View: Aldous Huxley, Environmental Prophet", in *Aldous Huxley Annual* 8 (2008): 235.

and minds".[319] Ordinarily, the phenomenal world is apprehended through the mesh of language and culture, thus, Huxley argues, one of the great benefits of psychedelic substances is their ability to remove this conceptual mesh, or, as he puts it, "to cut holes in the fence of verbalized symbols".[320] In the face of the crisis posed by overpopulation and the decimation of natural resources, Huxley argues that our culturally conditioned responses are inadequate, and contends that "widespread training in the art of cutting holes in cultural fences is now the most urgent of necessities".[321] For Huxley, then, psychedelic drugs can both help ordinary men and women to perceive nature as sacred and to abandon the outmoded traditions and ideas (such as man's dominion over nature) that have contributed to the environmental crisis.

Conclusion

There are three main strands to Huxley's legacy. His idea of human potentialities had a significant impact on the Esalen Institute and the Human Potential Movement. But as I have shown, these human potentialities had nothing to do with evolutionary mysticism and the cultivation of supernormal powers, but rather concerned techniques for enhancing well-being, creativity and cognitive efficiency. In his various lectures and essays on the subject, Huxley proposed that children and adults be educated in the "nonverbal humanities", for example the Alexander technique and the Bates method: these were focused on the body rather than the mind, and one of the aims was to help us realise that humans are amphibians who inhabit any number of different worlds at the same time, not merely the mind's artificial homemade universe of symbols and language. The second strand of Huxley's legacy was his mystical interpretation of psychedelic experience. Prior to meeting Huxley, Humphry Osmond had regarded mescaline and LSD as psychotomimetics, which enabled psychiatrists to experience psychosis in order to gain insights into mental disorders such as schizophrenia, whereas after guiding Huxley's first mescaline experience in 1953, Osmond began to subscribe to Huxley's thesis that mescaline and LSD facilitated a greater manifestation of Mind at Large in the user, and coined the word psychedelic (mind-manifesting) to replace the misleading clinical term psychotomimetic. The final strand of Huxley's legacy is his pervasive influence on the New Age and Deep Ecology movements. Huxley's thinking anticipated

319 Huxley, "Culture and the Individual", 43.
320 Ibid., 44.
321 Ibid., 47.

many of the most cherished notions of the New Age, such as the harmony between the new physics and a holistic vision of the world in which everything is intimately interrelated, an antipathy to Christian and Cartesian dualism, and an interest in the paranormal, meditation and alternative medicine. Twenty years before the formation of the Deep Ecology movement, Huxley was promoting this-worldly philosophies such as Zen Buddhism and Tantra that conceived of nature as sacred, rather than soulless matter to be exploited and consumed, and he was subsequently adopted as one of the movement's key thinkers. Huxley's final novel *Island* proved to be influential for both the New Age and Deep Ecology movements, what with its utopian vision of men and women living in harmony with nature, achieving their human potentialities and, with the help of the *moksha*-medicine, regarding their bodies and the natural world as sacred.

Conclusion

This book has highlighted the centrality of alternative spirituality in the work of Aldous Huxley. As noted in Chapter 1, Huxley had occasional intimations of oneness with nature as a teenager. As a young man at Balliol College, Oxford, he was drawn to the work of mostly Christian mystics such as Jacob Boehme, St Teresa of Avila and St John of the Cross, and some of his early poetry contains mystical or spiritual motifs. But, as I demonstrated in Chapter 2, Huxley's interest in mysticism was held in check by his ongoing allegiance to science and a satirical disposition that sought to reduce everything to absurdity. However, Huxley's relationship with the science writer J.W.N. Sullivan led him briefly to entertain an idealist reading of the new physics, which resulted in the first mystical seeker in his fiction, Calamy, who abandons the barren leaves of science and art and retreats from the sensual world to pursue a contemplative life in a cabin on the Apuan Alps. But Huxley was unhappy with the novel and his mystical inclinations were quashed by a trip to India and Sri Lanka, during which he became convinced that spirituality was the curse of the East since it had impeded the spread of science and civilisation.

On his return to Europe in 1926, Huxley renewed his friendship with D.H. Lawrence, who exercised a significant influence over Huxley until his death in 1930. Although, as noted in Chapter 2, Huxley could not share Lawrence's animistic worldview, he developed a secular version of Lawrence's philosophy that he called life worship, which strove for equilibrium between body and mind, and in his fiction from this period, particularly in *Point Count Point* (1928), he sought to depict the world in its multiple aspects – scientific, religious, emotional, metaphysical and so on. After Lawrence's death, Huxley developed an interest in the paranormal, which was to last for the rest of his life, and led to his closely following the work of J.B. Rhine at Duke University and the British Society for Psychical Research, which he eventally joined in 1956.

The mystical turn in Huxley's work was the result of a confluence of different factors. In 1929, he had befriended Gerald Heard, who was interested in psychical research and Asian religions. In the autumn of 1934, Huxley began to suffer from depression and insomnia and he turned to meditation and *prāṇāyāma* in order to help him relax. Meanwhile, Heard had become involved in what became known as the Peace Pledge Union (PPU) and encouraged Huxley to join. In his propaganda work for the PPU, Huxley began to advance a mystical philosophy that emphasised the unity of humankind. Huxley had been suffering from writer's block, but his mystical turn inspired him to take his novel, *Eyeless in Gaza* (1936), in a new direction that reflected and in some

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ways anticipated his new commitment to mysticism and pacifism. As a result of his depression, Huxley sought out alternative therapies and practices, such as the Alexander technique and colonic irrigation.

In Chapter 4, I analysed Huxley's move to America, where he became acquainted with two new spiritual influences, Swami Prabhavananda and Jiddu Krishnamurti. While Huxley never identified himself as a Vedantin like his friend Christopher Isherwood, he was closely associated with the Vedanta Society of Southern California during the late 1930s and 40s and contributed to the magazine *Vedanta for the West*. Krishnamurti exercised a greater influence than Prabhavananda, who was too devotional for Huxley's liking. Huxley felt that Krishnamurti was a genuine mystic and derived considerable support from him during World War II when he was being accused of escapism by critics back in England. He was Krishnamurti's neighbour at Wrightwood in the mid-1940s, acted as a trustee to Krishnamurti's Happy Valley School and wrote a foreword to Krishnamurti's book *The First and Last Freedom* (1954). It was Huxley's conviction that there would never be a lasting peace unless there was a religious philosophy to which all nations could subscribe, and to this end he compiled *The Perennial Philosophy* (1945), which I examined in Chapter 3.

The early 1950s saw a resurgence of Huxley's interest in the paranormal and he and Maria hosted a regular Tuesday-night gathering at their home in North King's Road, where the assembled guests observed hypnosis, séances and psi phenomena. The Huxleys were also enthusiastic adopters of new alternative therapies, such as the Bates method, dianetics and E-Therapy. Huxley practised self-hypnosis to alleviate insomnia and made "magnetic passes" to help Maria manage the pain associated with various disorders.

After World War II, Huxley began to move away from the asceticism of neo-Advaita and was increasingly drawn in his work to the philosophies of Taoism, Tantra, Mahayana and Zen Buddhism. In Chapter 5, I noted how his first mescaline experiment in 1953 reinforced these life-affirming philosophies, since Huxley experienced a mystical transcendence of his ego and an identification with the world around him, which he perceived as sacred. While at first, in *The Doors of Perception* (1954), he asserted that mescaline was a conduit to visionary experience, his later experiments with LSD and mescaline led him to maintain that psychedelic drugs could afford a full-blown mystical experience. One of the most remarkable products of this new Tantric turn in Huxley's work was his treatment of the body: having previously represented the body in his fiction as a source of shame, whose libidinal instincts were antipathetic to a spiritual life of contemplation, in *Island* (1962) the Palanese express their spirituality through the practice of *maithuna*.

Although *Island* was derided by some critics on its publication, it was subsequently embraced by spiritual seekers in the New Age and the Deep Ecology movements, as well as neo-shamans such as Terence McKenna and Carlos Castaneda. As noted in the previous chapter, Huxley's notion of human potentialities was an inspiration both to the founders of the Esalen Institute and the Human Potential Movement. Moreover, Huxley's mystical reading of psychedelic experience had a profound effect both on psychiatrists, such as Humphry Osmond, as well as movers and shakers in the counterculture (Timothy Leary and Terence McKenna).

Given the importance of the Perennial Philosophy in Huxley's work, it comes as a surprise to hear him proclaim, in a letter to Reid Gardner on June 25, 1962: "I remain an agnostic who aspires to be a gnostic – but a gnostic only on the mystical level, a gnostic without symbols, cosmologies or a pantheon".[1] For a start, the verb "remain" implies that Huxley has always been an agnostic and yet this is demonstrably not the case. For instance, in November 1953, Huxley appeared before a judge in order to become an American citizen, and stated for the record: "I was brought up as an agnostic and continued to reject the religious approach to life until about twenty years ago, when I started to feel an ever deepening concern with religious mysticism".[2] In other words, Huxley stopped being an agnostic circa 1934. This was the period in which Huxley began practising meditation and started to promote mysticism as a universal religion that would foster unity and peace. If at first mysticism was a means to the end of peace, by the late 1930s and throughout the 1940s mysticism became an end in itself. The final tenet of the Perennial Philosophy, for example, affirms that: "man's life on earth has only one end and purpose: to identify himself with his eternal Self and so to come to unitive knowledge of the Divine Ground".[3] Variations on this assertion can be found throughout *The Perennial Philosophy*, such as "the fact remains that man's final end is unitive knowledge of the Godhead".[4] These statements manifestly lack the equivocations and qualifications of the agnostic, who would write: *if* there is a "godhead", *if* "unitive knowledge" can in fact be achieved with such an entity, etc.

Furthermore, where *Ends and Means* (1937) is presented as a "practical cookery book of reforms", with the goal of achieving a utopian society of "liberty, peace, justice, and brotherly love", in *After Many a Summer* (1939) Mr Propter

1 Smith, *Letters*, 935.
2 Quoted in Dunaway, *Huxley in Hollywood*, 347.
3 Huxley, introduction to *The Song of God*, 13.
4 Huxley, *Perennial Philosophy*, 154.

maintains that social reforms are otiose since even the most idealistic politicians, trapped on the human level of time and attachment, can merely canalise evil in different directions, rather than eradicating it. Only mystics like Mr Propter, who can transcend their time-bound human personalities and obtain the "experience of eternity" are capable of doing good.[5] In Huxley's next novel, *Time Must Have a Stop* (1944), Sebastian Barnack's minimum working hypothesis states that to achieve "unitive knowledge" of the Ground, "to realize this supreme identity, is the final end and purpose of human existence".[6] As with *After Many a Summer*, Huxley valorises transcendence over immanence, and salvation lies in transcending time in favour of eternity, in transcending the fallen world in favour of the godhead or Ground. *After Many a Summer*, *Time Must Have a Stop*, *The Perennial Philosophy* – these are evidently not the books of an agnostic.

So how to account for Huxley's profession of agnosticism in 1962? Sally Paulsell points out that in Huxley's next letter to Gardner he affirms that in his psychedelic experiments, he has had the conviction of "the world's fundamental All Rightness", and concludes that Huxley's "inquiring mind typically juxtaposes skepticism with affirmation; the stages of his mystical experience do not fall into a doubt-free steady continuum".[7] K.S. Gill argues that Huxley was a Buddhist at this stage, who, like the Buddha, adopted a stance of agnosticism towards "metaphysical propositions".[8] Dana Sawyer maintains that, on the one hand, "Huxley was most certainly a mystic", and on the other that he only subscribed to the Perennial Philosophy "provisionally" as opposed to "dogmatically", and thus he "must be called an agnostic".[9]

My explanation is somewhat different. In what I have termed the Tantric phase of his career, from around the time of his first mescaline experience in 1953, Huxley valorises immanence over transcendence and once again concerns himself with making the world a better place. As I noted in Chapter 5, mescaline allowed Huxley to perceive the creases in his trousers, the books on his shelves and the blades of grass in his garden as sacred or divine. Granted, even in the earlier ascetic phase of his career Huxley had praised the Mahayana ideal of the *bodhisattva*, who elects to remain in *samsara* in order to help

5 Huxley, *Summer*, 120.

6 Huxley, *Time*, 282.

7 Sally A. Paulsell, "Color and Light: Huxley's Pathway to Spiritual Reality", *Twentieth Century Literature* 41, no. 1 (1995): 83.

8 K.S. Gill, "*Nirvana* for Agnostics: Aldous Huxley and the Asian Context", *Aldous Huxley Annual* 6 (2006): 168.

9 Sawyer, *Aldous Huxley*, 187–188.

others achieve *nirvana*, nonetheless the emphasis in *The Perennial Philosophy* is on liberation from *samsara*; and while the enlightened *bodhisattva* perceives *nirvana* in *samsara*, this knowledge does not lead him to celebrate the sacred nature of the body through the practice of *maithuna*; consequently, Huxley's mystical heroes from this time, such as Mr Propter and Bruno Rontini, are ascetics who abstain from sex. However, by the end of the 1950s, one senses that liberation or salvation was no longer the ultimate goal for Huxley. In *The Human Situation* (1977), he writes "I think most of us would agree [that] the end of human life is to realize individual potentialities to their limits" and "to create a society which makes possible such a realization".[10] This sounds more like the sentiments of an agnostic, who cannot be certain of other-worldly salvation and thus advocates making the best of his earthly existence in the present. Moreover, in *Island* none of the characters affirm that man's final end is unitive knowledge of the godhead and there is no mention of a perennial philosophy. When Farnaby impugns the mystical experience of the *moksha*-medicine and argues that it merely takes place in one's head, Dr Robert responds:

> So maybe the whole thing does happen inside one's skull. Maybe it is private and there's no unitive knowledge of anything but one's own physiology. Who cares? The fact remains that the experience can open one's eyes and make one blessed and transform one's whole life.[11]

Ranga describes the Palanese as "Tantrik agnostics",[12] and Dr Robert's words bear this out: even if there is no God or Tao or Mind at Large, the experience of the *moksha*-medicine is inherently valuable, as it instils in one compassion and love for nature and one's fellow humans. Pala is no mere proving ground in which the Palanese get to accrue good karma for liberation in some far-flung rebirth in the future, it is Huxley's approximation of a credible heaven on earth in the here and now. In much the same vein, Huxley was dismissive of teleological interpretations of history, in which for instance the present moment must be sacrificed in favour of a fascist or a communist paradise that will be achieved in a hundred years' time; and, as noted in Chapter 6, Huxley rejected Heard's spiritual evolution, in which humans waited patiently for the new era of "superconsciousness", when it could be enjoyed via the *moksha*-medicine now.

10 Huxley, "Population Explosion", 52.
11 Huxley, *Island*, 138–139.
12 Ibid., 82.

In *This Timeless Moment* (1968), Laura Huxley describes *Island* as her husband's "ultimate legacy".[13] She writes that Huxley

> was appalled [...] at the fact that what he wrote in *Island* was not taken seriously. It was treated as a work of science fiction, when it was not fiction, because each one of the ways of living he described in *Island* was not a product of his fantasy, but something that had been tried in one place or another, some of them in our own everyday life. If the way Aldous died were known, it might awaken people to the awareness that not only this, but many other facts described in *Island* are possible here and now. Aldous asking for the *moksha*-medicine while dying is not only a confirmation of his open-mindedness and courage, but as such a last gesture of continuing importance.[14]

One of the reasons for the sometimes scathing reception of *Island* (Frank Kermode in *Partisan Review* judged it "one of the worst novels ever written"[15]) was the fact that whereas Huxley had previously struck a successful balance between narrative and ideas (as in *Point Counter Point* and *Eyeless in Gaza*), in *Island* the sheer weight of ideas sinks the narrative ship and the only vividly realised character is the guilt-ridden sex-obsessed outsider Will Farnaby (a stock type in Huxley's *oeuvre*), while the Palanese are mere cyphers who articulate Huxley's ideas with improbable eloquence and erudition. On the other hand, a preponderance of ideas over narrative and lots of turgid exposition is a feature of the genre, and in this respect *Island* is no better or worse than Thomas Moore's *Utopia* (1516) or Samuel Butler's *Erewhon* (1872). "Huxley's skill in describing the ideal was not up to his skill in satirizing the real", writes Alan Watts.

> Yet it must be admitted that for *any* artist the depiction of heaven is the hardest task of all – is thus the task in which he may most easily make a fool of himself. *Island* is a "thinly fictionalized" collection of essays on education, psychology, and metaphysics in which Huxley stuck out his neck as far as it would go. He advocated everything calculated to evoke the ridicule of sensible people – abolition of the sacred American family, free love, Tantric sex practises, drugs for inducing mystical experience,

13 Laura Huxley, *This Timeless Moment*, 289.
14 Ibid., 308.
15 Quoted in Watt, *Critical Heritage*, 453.

> and the fantasy of the island paradise. He made himself a sitting duck for snickers in the literary reviews and scandals in the Sunday supplements.[16]

But it was precisely these aspects – the Tantric sex, holistic spirituality and the *moksha*-medicine – that made it so fascinating to the next generation.

To return to the subject of Huxley's agnosticism, it seems from one of his Santa Barbara lectures in 1959 that he did believe in the existence of a cosmic mind: "I myself happen to believe that the deeper self within us is in some way continuous with the mind of the universe or whatever you like to call it".[17] But you need not think of it, he adds, in a religious way.

> You can practise mysticism entirely in psychological terms, and on the basis of a complete agnosticism in regard to the conceptual ideas of orthodox religion, and yet come to knowledge – gnosis – and the fruits of knowledge will be the fruits of the spirit: love, joy, peace, and the capacity to help other people.[18]

While the Palanese variously describe themselves as Buddhists and Tantriks and adorn their temples with statutes of Śiva, theirs is an experiential spirituality based on the sacramental use of the *moksha*-medicine which firmly rejects the fixed dogmas of organised religion. Dr Robert tells Farnaby: "we have no established church, and our religion stresses immediate experience and deplores belief in unverifiable dogmas and the emotions which that belief inspires".[19] The Palanese erect divine scarecrows to guard their crops in order to teach their children that "all gods are homemade, and [...] it's we who pull their strings and so give them the power to pull ours".[20] For Jeffrey Kripal, Huxley "was not an agnostic with respect to radical mystical sensibilities, for he had actually experienced Mind at Large, and many times", but he was an agnostic "with respect to all traditional religious claims" concerning God.[21]

At the end of his life, then, Huxley was an agnostic regarding organised religion who garnered the fruits of the spirit through a psychedelic gnosis. While

16 Alan Watts, "Some Remembrances of Aldous Huxley", in *Psychedelic Review* 1, no. 3 (1964): 267.
17 Huxley, "Man and Religion", 203.
18 Ibid.
19 Huxley, *Island*, 146–147.
20 Ibid., 200. See also Kripal, *Esalen*, 90.
21 Kripal, "An Island in Mind", 43.

Huxley continues to be identified, especially in the academy, with the technocratic dystopia of *Brave New World* (1932), it was his utopian vision in *Island* – of a personal alternative spirituality based on the ritual use of psychedelic substances and the practice of *maithuna*, which inspires in the Palanese a profound reverence for the body and nature – that constituted his chief legacy to the spiritual seekers of the future.

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